

# The Find. Love. Train. Potty Training Guide

Potty training should be a top priority as it tends to be the deciding factor in your dog's quality of life. With a little time, patience, and planning, this can be a relatively simple and painless process. Our Find. Love. Train. Potty Training Guide provides a positive plan of action that will deliver quick results.

Effective potty training is critical for puppies. At an early age, dogs learn quickly, and it is more challenging for a dog to unlearn a behavior or habit than it is to learn good habits in the first place. Most dogs want to please their owners and live in harmony, so be patient and be consistent!

## Find. Love. Train. Basic Truths

Before we get started, it is important to review the core tenets of the Find. Love. Train. philosophy. (Stick with us and you'll see these again and again!)

1. Accept responsibility for the success or failure during training. Never blame your dog for accidents. It is up to you to be watchful and to prevent mistakes.
2. Be patient. Dogs do not know what you want them to do, you have to teach them.
3. Train 24 hours a day and stay consistent. Dogs learn through repetition, and any behavior that is rewarded will be repeated. The more you practice the faster that you will set the behaviors
4. Use fairness in all things. If your dog does not understand what you want, you have no right to correct him. Show him what you want, and praise the right behavior.
5. Be positive. Every time you interact with your dog it is

learning something – whether it is negative or positive is up to you.

6. Practice attention lessons and commands. If your dog is not paying attention he can't learn.

## Topics:

- [The Find. Love. Train. Potty Training Guide](#)
  - [Potty Behavior Basics](#)
  - [Prepare for Potty Training Success](#)
  - [Potty Training – Step by Step](#)
  - [Accidents happen...](#)
  - [Potty Training Signals – The Bell Method](#)
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## Crate Training Basics

Crate training is one of the most misunderstood subjects in your pup/dog's world. Folks may think that a crate is a horrible punishment – a jail used to confine your dog when he has been bad. In reality, dogs, like their wolf ancestors, are den animals. They feel secure

and cozy in their dens, and the crate acts as a safe harbor in times of stress when dogs just need a break from us and all the frantic activity that seem to follow their humans.

Crates also serve a practical purpose of keeping your dog safe from harm when you are unable to be with them, and they can be an invaluable aid during potty training.



## **FAIRNESS IN ALL THINGS**

Although the crate is a wonderful training tool, when used incorrectly it can actually be detrimental to your pet.

1. If you are at work all day and then come home and only let your dog out for short periods of time then the den becomes a prison.
2. If you keep your dog in a crate all the time and do not let it exercise and interact with the family, it will soon become frustrated. This can lead to destructive behaviors.
3. It is never fair to leave a puppy or dog in its crate past the amount of time that he can control his bladder.

## **CHOOSING THE PROPER DEN**

Selecting the right crate for your pet is critical to your success. Too small and your pet will feel trapped and uncomfortable; too big and it loses its den-like appeal. Here are some basic tips to help you pick a crate:

1. The crate should be large enough for the dog to sit, stand, stretch out and turn around comfortably.
2. Choose a crate that can accommodate the puppy when he is full grown. (So you don't have to buy another crate every few months.) While your puppy is small, create a barrier within the crate to make it temporarily smaller. Some wire and plastic crates come with a divider, but it is also easy to create a makeshift divider by blocking excess space with a box or bedding.
3. Keep in mind that if a puppy has enough room to go to the back of the crate to potty then return to the front to eat and sleep, he will have accidents in his crate. The space should be limited.

# PROPER INTRODUCTION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS.

Most dog crate nightmare stories are caused by taking a new dog and just putting him into the crate without a proper introduction. Making the crate a place the dog wants to go – rather than stuffing the dog into its new home and closing the door – is critical.

This is an “Any behavior that is rewarded will be repeated moment.” So use this to your advantage.

1. Place your crate in an area where your family will be spending a lot of time.
2. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Never use a dog pillow until you are sure that it will not become a chew toy. If your dog eats its bed, you may have an emergency vet visit in your future!
3. Have lots of toys and soft yummy treats on hand.
4. Sit about 2 feet from the crate and encourage the dog to approach. Say the dog's name, clap your hands, make kissing noises – whatever it takes to get the dog's attention.
5. Do not use the word “come” unless you are sure that the dog will respond to it. We want praise the dog for approaching the crate not for “coming”. If your pet does not come toward you when called, you can try to lure him in with treats, praising every forward advance.
6. When your dog is comfortable being in close proximity to the crate, place the treat on the floor next to the crate. Every time your dog gets near the treats praise or click. Do not wait for him to take the treat.
7. The next step is to get your dog comfortable with touching the crate. Start by placing a treat that touches the crate.
8. Make a trail of treats to the open door. Praise every forward motion as your dog is scarfing down the goodies.

9. Next, toss a few goodies in the crate door. Your dog should follow them in even if they are a bit shy; just give it time. Do not force the behavior, and praise every forward movement.
10. Now that your dog is familiar with the crate, let's make going in a lot of fun! Start a game with your dog's favorite toy by tossing the toy into the crate. You can add treats, if necessary. Continue this process until your pup is running happily in and out of the crate.
11. After your dog has mastered going in and out of his crate, you can add a word/command. Some people use "crate" or "kennel". It does not matter what you call it but add a word to all behaviors. It will help you communicate with your friend.

Whew, this has been a lot of work. This is probably a good time to take a break and do something else for a few minutes. When you are ready to resume their lessons go back a few steps and toss a favorite toy or treats into their crate. Make a fun game out of this, as what puppy can resist playing a game with you. You're just reinforcing your earlier lesson.

The next hurdle is teaching your dog to be comfortable in the crate with the door closed.

1. Once your dog is running in and out of the crate reliably, toss in a cookie and a great chew toy.
2. Close the crate door and wait about 30 seconds. Open the door and reward your pup.
3. Never open the door while your dog is whining or trying to get out as he learns very quickly to howl longer and louder until you give in and open the door. If your dog exhibits this behavior and is not stopping then actually get up and leave the room until the temper tantrum subsides. Always wait until your puppy is quiet before you open the door.
4. After you let your dog out, play for a moment letting him start running in and out of the crate again. Close

the door again and wait two minutes to open it.

5. Repeat this increasing the time to five minutes with you sitting beside the crate.

Depending on your pup and the amount of time this has taken you to get the five minutes quiet in their den, it might be beneficial to take another break.

1. When you begin the exercise again just repeat the above procedure but this time after closing the door leave the room for a couple of minutes. Be sure that you are out of sight.
2. Wait to be sure that your pup is quiet and return and release them.
3. Do this on and off during the day increasing the time your little buddy is left alone in small increments.

## HELPFUL TIPS

1. If your dog starts to whine and cry to be let out you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next time, try leaving him in the crate for a shorter time period.
2. Do not release your dog from the crate until he is quiet. Dogs learn very quickly, and they will know that tantrums work and are the best way to get you to open the door.
3. Have high value chew toys to use just at crate time. A frozen stuffed kong can keep your pup happy for a very long time.
4. Keep the crate door open when your dog isn't in it. Your dog may use this a space to rest or recuperate during the day.
5. Implement a 2-foot-rule so that when your dog goes into the crate no one is allowed to go within two feet. This is a courtesy to your dog.
6. Reduce liquid intake before long periods of crate confinement. A puppy that is healthy can be taken off

water about an hour before bedtime to reduce the likelihood of needing to go in the middle of the night, but if you feel that your dog may need water during the night, you can put ice cubes in a dish to regulate the amount of fluid intake.

7. Feed your dog in it's crate. This makes the crate a very desirable space.
  8. If you leave your dog in a crate when you are away from home, it helps to continue to crate him for short periods of time when you are home. This prevents them from associating the crate with being left alone.
  9. It may be useful to crate your dog ten to fifteen minutes before leaving the house. This prevents separation anxiety behavior in the crate because the dog will not equate being put in the crate to leaving him alone.
  10. Do not make a big deal out of coming home or leaving the house as this will increase the possibility of separation anxiety.
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# **Potty Training – Step by Step**

## **Step 1: Introduce the Potty Spot**



Once you have picked an elimination zone for your pet, it's time to make some formal introductions.

1. When you arrive home with your new dog, put on his leash and collar and take him to the designated "potty" spot. This sets the dog up for success immediately by giving him a chance to eliminate in the correct place.
2. It is best to carry a new puppy the spot, if possible. Many puppies have never been on a leash, and you do not want the first experience with such an important training aid to be a negative one. Carrying the dog also alleviates the problem of your puppy stopping on the way out the door to go potty.
3. If your dog weighs more than you do then just lead them out to the potty spot using a happy voice and cookies if necessary.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If your new dog has not had puppy shots and at least two boosters do not take him to an area where other dogs play or potty. This could be detrimental to his health. Puppies have little protection against many diseases until at least a week after their second booster.

## Step 2: Add a Few Commands

Choose a single a word that will mean "Go potty". The obvious choice here is "potty", but feel free to get creative or use an alternative word. You'll also use the command "Outside".

When it's time to go:

1. Walk to the door and say, "Outside!".
2. Lead the dog to your potty spot, and say "Potty!"
3. Place your dog on the ground, and hold the leash loosely.

Dogs learn by repetition so if you repeat it every time you take them out they will add a new human word to their vocabulary.

## Step 3: Let's go Potty

About now, you and your dog are milling about the potty area. It's time for a little patience!

1. Stand with a relaxed posture and tell the dog to "Go Potty." Your dog may not show a lot of interest in transacting business at first – everything in a puppy's world is distracting. This is where patience comes in. It does not matter if they roll in the grass, try to chase a butterfly or bark at your foot. Ignore everything except the behavior that you want – completing business.
2. Do not stare at, walk around with, speak to or play with your dog. This time is used to let him think about what you want him to do.
3. Glance at your dog occasionally and say, "Go Potty" in a happy yet calm voice. Do not use an excited let's play voice or a "GO-POTTY-before-I-strangle-you" tone. Neither will help your puppy focus on the task at hand.
4. After your dog starts to potty, wait for him to just about finish. Praise enthusiastically. "Woohoo, Good Potty!" Praise and treat your dog for doing the right thing. Be very careful with timing your praise! Your dog might stop in the middle of business and you will be stuck outside waiting for act two. Worse yet, you will go inside thinking that potty training is completed, and you will have an indoor accident.
5. Remember that just because your dog urinated, the job is not complete. Give your dog a little more time to finish. Dogs will not need to poop every time that they urinate so watch for signs that they still need a bit more time to finish their business.

## Step 4: Learn the Signals

In an [earlier section](#), we listed the "tail tail" signs that your dog needs to take care of a little business. These

included sniffing around, loitering by the door, barking, and other attention getters. Usually, the more set the potty training behavior, the more overt the dog's signal, but early in the training process you'll need to look for subtlety.

Many people complain that they have done all the right things yet their dog still has accidents by the door. Their dog knows to go to the door but does not seem to signal that it wants to go out. The truth is that most dogs will signal their owners in some way; they just may not be especially vocal about it.

1. Different dogs have different potty cues.
2. All dogs have little habits that can let you know what they need. It may be difficult to catch subtle clues such as sitting quietly and staring at the door or just looking pitiful. This is especially true if you are in the bedroom making your bed and the door is on the other side of the house. This makes it impossible to catch his behavior unless you can see through walls.

Your best bet is to show your dog a way to effectively let you know they need to go out. A personal favorite is to [teach your dog to ring a bell to signal potty time](#). It's a relatively easy skill to teach and can make a big difference, and you can also train your dog to stand at the door and bark to go out.

## **Step 5: Set the Behavior**

Most dogs pick up on new commands and tricks rather quickly. A new behavior will take only minutes to teach, but may take up to six months to become set. A set behavior is one that has become ingrained as a way of life. Unless extraordinarily tempted or under great stress, the dog will stick to the routine. Before a behavior is set, you need to be vigilant with your dog and try to never let them make a mistake.

Here are a couple of tips to help you set the potty outside behavior quickly:

1. Be sure that your new friend understands the difference between potty and play time. Your dog is much happier to go out and play with you or explore, but you need to distinguish between the two behaviors. Play is a reward. After your dog finishes his business completely, say “Play, you want to play!” in a happy voice. Your dog will quickly realize that nothing good happens until after he potties.
2. During the training process, do not just open the door and let your dog go outside to potty alone. Your dog may just go outside and play or investigate – not potty. So, he realizes that he still needs to go when he is back inside.
3. □Some dogs need to walk around a bit before getting down to business. If this is the case with your dog, take a short walk around the yard, returning to your potty spot occasionally. Stand and wait using the technique described above.
4. Once your dog is vaccinated and can safely go on walks, it is best to go directly to a place, away from your home and stop, let them sniff and continue with the same procedure.

## Potty Training Topics:

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# Prepare for Potty Training Success

From the moment you decide to bring another new family member into your home you must set them up for success. Those first hours or days with a new pet are stressful for both you and the dog!



1. Bring your new pet home during a time that everyone in the home can spend a couple of days with him. Bringing a puppy or dog into your home and leaving him on his own to acclimate to new and sometimes scary surroundings never works well for you or your new friend.
2. Choose your new friend wisely. A puppy takes much more time to teach appropriate behaviors and will not have the ability to hold his bladder as long as a mature dog. A dog that is rescued from a foster home or similar program will already have many of their basic house skills in place.
3. You cannot expect a puppy to be able to wait for 6 or 8 hours to be let out. Even homes that have a doggie door are useless unless your dog has been taught to go in and out when necessary.
4. Always go with your puppy outside to potty. Once he's finished, let him run and play.
5. Remember that with any change in environment even the best trained dog may have an accident. Even if your new pet was completely housebroken in his old home, he will still need to be shown where to eliminate, and you must learn to read the signals that tell you when your dog

needs to potty.

## What you'll need to get started

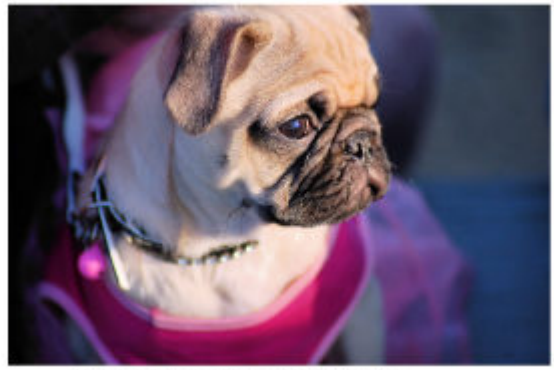
1. If you are crate training, have the appropriately sized crate ready and take the time to introduce your dog to the crate properly. (see our [Crate Training Guide](#))
2. Pick a spot in your yard for your dog to eliminate in your yard and always take the same path to get there. Do not have your pup go potty right next to your house or your door because this will create a life-long habit. A secluded or out of the way area will make cleanup easier and reduce the chance of tracking unwanted waste into your home.
3. Stash a 6 ft. leash and soft treats on hand by the crate or door. You'll use these each time you take your dog out to potty. The leash will keep your dog focused on the task at hand.

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## Potty Behavior Basics

The objective of potty training is to teach the dog to overtly signal that it needs to go and to wait until he can get to an “approved” potty location. During training, you’ll need to read subtle clues and proactively encourage your dog to potty regularly.



PUG DOG IN DRESS - © Donny | Dreamstime.com

It’s hard to be vigilant during potty training if you don’t know what you’re trying to spot. Dogs have fairly standard signals and behaviors that indicate when they need to visit a potty area.

## **“Tail Tail” Signs That Your Dog Might Need To Potty**

Here are some subtle and not so subtle clues:

1. Sniffing
2. Turning in circles
3. Wandering off to potty in private. Dogs are clean animals when given the right opportunity. They do not wish to potty where they eat, sleep or play, but your home is probably big enough for them to find a “good” (for them) spot.
4. Whining
5. Pawing you, barking at you, or nudging you
6. Staring at you or the door
7. Standing by the door with a wishful look in their eyes.
8. Squatting (uh oh, you’re too late)

During training, you must not ignore these signals or your dog will give up and find somewhere nearby to do his business. Later on, we’ll talk about an alternative “alert” method using a bell, but teaching your dog to bark or whine is a good strategy – a signal that you really can’t ignore.

## **When You Gotta Go You Gotta Go**

The best strategy for rapid potty training is to be proactive. There are certain times when you can be pretty confident that your dog needs a potty break.

1. As soon as your pet wakes up! Forget your normal morning routine, and run, run fast to take your new friend outside.
2. After a long night, your dog definitely needs to go. If your dog is napping outside of its crate, make sure that you take him out immediately when he wakes up.
3. Ten to twenty minutes after eating. This includes every meal or snack time.
4. After playtime. Look for the “tail tail” signs during any break in play and rush your dog outside.

We recommend using a crate during potty training, dogs typically will not potty in their crates, and it is easy to take the dog outside after any period of confinement.

## **How long can you leave a puppy confined without a potty break?**

Keep in mind every dog is different. A small puppy will need to go more often than a big dog. Think about how much smaller their bladder is compared to a bigger puppy. The general guidelines for crating your dog are:

1. 2 months old = 2 hours of confinement without a potty break
2. 3 months old = 3 hours of confinement without a potty break
3. 4 months old = 4 hours of confinement without a potty break

These are just guidelines. If your dog is struggling, take him out more often. This can be an issue especially for smaller breeds and puppies.

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## Accidents happen...

... even to the most diligent pet owners and best trained dogs... Often accidents can be linked to extreme need and/or stress; sometimes you've just missed your dog's signals.



## Whoops There Goes the Rug

No matter how vigilant, there are times when you will step in a puddle or find a present on a favorite carpet. How you react in this situation determines how your dog views you and your leadership.

## **DO**

1. Claim responsibility for the success or failure of your pups potty training.
2. Crate your pup if you cannot be watching.
3. Tie him to you if you are busy around the house and you are distracted.
4. Make potty breaks your main priority first thing in the morning. This means that you may have to wait on that first cup of coffee, unless you have a friend or spouse that is kind enough to bring you one while you stand shivering in your pajama's saying, "Go Potty" to your little friend while the neighbors shake their head in wonder.
5. Remember that even though your pup went potty before breakfast he will still need to go out again after he has his morning meal.
6. Clean up any accidents with the proper product. You must use a product that has an enzyme breaker in it. If you use most common household products they will hide the smell from you but not your dog. You have to eliminate the odor completely.
7. Watch for signs that your furry little friend needs to go out. Remember that a puppy that is sniffing and circling is giving you a clue that they need to go potty. Learn the signs of impending disaster. All dogs have them.

## **DON'T**

1. Scream at your puppy. Take your dog to the offensive spot and show it to him or rub his nose in it. Or throw him outside while doing the inappropriate screaming behavior. These behaviors make your dog think that you're nuts, and he might start to question your stability. Dogs do not follow unstable leaders.
2. Bring the dog back in the house as soon as he goes potty. Wait just a minute and then tell him, " Play, Ya wanna Play." Then give him a little personal fun time.

If you take him in the minute he goes potty he may well figure out that as soon as he potty's the fun times are over with.

## **Caught in the Act (Or No Not On My Rug)**

1. It is never fair to correct you dog after an accident. What exactly is the appropriate behavior when you catch the cute little guy in the act? Right at that moment, he is not looking so cute, and you may be feeling really frustrated. Think back to five minutes before his transgression when he was upside down, letting you rub his belly. Try to remember how cute he was at that point in time.
2. When you catch your dog in the act, make an abrupt noise such as clapping your hands and give a correction noise such as augh, augh or baap, baap, baap to stop the unwanted behavior.
3. Use a firm tone of voice to indicate that this is totally inappropriate. Firm does not mean yelling like your head is going to explode. It just means firm as in "I mean business".
4. Never run at your dog and try to stop them. Your dog will want to run away and try to hide.
5. Say "Outside, potty outside."
6. Keep your body posture relaxed and do not stare down your dog. This could make your pup run or even drop and pee submissively. Neither is a great scenario and can be much worse to clean up after.
7. Take your dog directly to his potty spot, and be sure to clean the spot with the appropriate cleaning product to prevent recurrence.

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# Potty Training Signals – The Bell Method

A key potty training challenge is establishing an unmistakable way for your dog to tell you that it's time to go outside. The signal needs to be obvious. One signalling method that is easily taught and successful uses a bell.



## Equipment

1. A bell that can hang on your doorknob. This needs to hang down to your dog's level, but can be any size or style of bell. Large jingle bells are easy to come by during the holiday season.
2. Plenty of soft treats. If you use a hard treat it slows down training time as you have to wait for your dog to chew. The faster the repetitions the quicker they learn.

# Training Process

1. Teach your dog [the “touch” command](#).
2. Teach your dog to “touch” the bell.
  - To start, it may be best to tape the bell so that it does not ring. Ringing may frighten your dog. Use the “touch” command until your dog is touching the bell reliably.
  - Remove the tape from the bell and say, “Touch.” When your pup touches it, say “good touch,” and reward the behavior. Make a big deal out of this, and give lots of treats and praise.
  - Hang the bell on the door used most often to go outside to potty, and have your dog touch the bell a couple of times to be sure that he is comfortable with the sound.
  - Once the dog touches the bell reliably, add a new word. Point at the bell and say, “Outside.”
  - When your pup rings the bell then you respond with “Good outside,” open the door and go out. Repeat this step a few more times. Remember that you want to let your dog know that he has achieved something incredible. So lots of praise and rewards.
  - Every time you take your dog outside to potty, go to the door say, “Outside, Potty”. Once your dog rings the bell, reward him and and take him to his potty spot. In no time your dog will understand that if he needs to go out, he just needs to ring the bell.

Of course, it is very important that you respond when your dog rings the potty bell. If you don't, your dog will not reliably use this signalling method.

This method is simple and painless! Now you can get on with the behaviors that are more fun. Your dog now knows the words

“touch”, “outside”, “potty”, “play” and “good”.

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## Nipping, Chewing and Biting! Oh my!

One of the first things that you will notice when you bring your new puppy home is that he is a biting, nipping machine. He will attack your toes and fingers with wild abandon. The second thing you will notice is that he is equipped with a full set of razor sharp teeth that are quite capable of breaking skin and drawing blood.

Nipping, chewing and biting behavior is more than a little unpleasant – so let’s look at the reasons behind it and the best way to change the behavior.

Most puppies learn basic bite inhibition and puppy manners while with their Mom and litter mates. This is why it is so important for puppies to stay with moms for a minimum of 9 to 12 weeks. During this period of time, puppies also need lots of socialization with people and other animals. They truly need the social interaction to grow and understand how to interact with the world.

**NOTE:** Before taking a puppy into the world, make sure that it is up to date on all vaccinations.

## **WHY DO PUPPIES NIP, CHEW AND BITE?**

1. **Play** – Puppies have no thumbs! They use their mouths to play with their litter mates or interact with their human family.
2. **Teething** – Incessant chewing helps to soothe sore gums.
3. **Boredom** – Pups are easily bored! When they have extra time on their paws, they chew to help alleviate the boredom.
4. **Curiosity** – Watch out if something chew worthy has been left lying within your puppy's reach. Be sure to pick up items that you do not want your puppy to chew on. He cannot tell the difference between a hundred dollar pair of leather boots and a squeaky toy.

Puppies are little and cute, but take care not to allow or encourage your puppy to chew on fingers and toes – or worse yet on earlobes and noses. Puppies can get carried away, and you might end up with an undesired body piercing.

It is much more difficult to stop a learned behavior than it is to prevent it in the first place. Do not tolerate nipping, chewing and biting from your puppy!

## **TRAINING STRATEGIES**

Puppies use their mouths when interacting with their litter mates. If they play too rough or bite down too hard the other pup will squeal and walk away from the game. This teaches the offending puppy that when he behaves badly the game will end. The pup soon realizes that his behavior is not being rewarded and he will learn to use his mouth in a gentler fashion. The goal is to mimic this behavior at home.

## Nipping & Biting

1. When your pup begins to chew on your feet or hands, immediately Yelp! loudly and remove your hands or feet away from the puppy.
2. Ignore your puppy for approximately 15 seconds and try again.
3. If the puppy continues to bite, leave the room or give him a “time out”.
4. Never allow your puppy to chew or bite, and use this method consistently.

## Chewing

1. When your pup is chewing on things that are inappropriate, remove the item from your puppy's mouth and replace it with an appropriate toy or snack.
2. Do not force the item out of his mouth if he won't give it up – offer him a better alternative!
3. After the puppy releases the item, be sure to praise profusely for the correct behavior.
4. When teething, puppies gums hurt, and they will chew on anything available to relieve their discomfort. It is important to provide chew toys that can help them survive this difficult time.
5. Teach your puppy the difference between dog toys and items that are off limits. Set “traps” that make the dog's items fun to chew and off limits items unpleasant. Leave off limits items on the floor, but spray them with a foul-tasting deterrent spray such as [Bitter Apple](#) or [Bitter End](#).
6. Add fun dog-appropriate items to the mix. When your puppy picks up a forbidden item, it will taste bad and he will spit it out and move on to a fun toy.

Offer praise when your puppy is chewing something that you approve of. Never miss the opportunity to reward correct behavior. A bored puppy will find entertainment. Generally,

this does not turn out well for us or any possessions that we might leave within easy reach.

Always leave plenty of chew toys and games around for your puppy. [Click here for puppy entertainment recommendations!](#)