

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.



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.

Potty Training 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](#)