

POTTY TRAINING FOR PUPPIES AND DOGS © Babette de Jongh

Crate training works best. It's simple, and the hardest part is not letting that precious puppy bamboozle you into letting him out when he needs to be in. Don't let that pitiful whine and those big eyes work on your emotions. You're doing the puppy a favor, a big favor, a life-vs-death favor, by teaching him that it's not okay to pee and poo in the house. If you have to, put that crated puppy in another part of the house so you don't hear the crying.

Crate training is natural for puppies. In the wild, a mama dog digs a den for her puppies, and they stay in that small, enclosed space unless and until the mama dog takes them outside. When they're really little, before they start eating solid food, the mama dog cleans up the puppies' messes. But when they start eating solid food, they miraculously develop the knowledge that it's not okay to pee or poo where they sleep. That's why crate training works. It's a natural instinct for a dog to do his business somewhere-other-than where he sleeps.

So the size of the crate is important. It needs to be big-enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in once it's grown. If your dog is a puppy that's going to grow a lot, get a crate that has a removable divider so you can make the crate not-big-enough for the puppy to sleep in one end of the crate and poop in the other.

So you've got the crate with the nice comfy bed and blanket and an assortment of safe chew-toys to keep the puppy busy when he's in his crate. Now, all you need is the courage of your convictions and a potty training schedule to follow.

First-thing in the morning (And with a young puppy, that means when the sun comes up. Sorry.) take Puppy out of his crate and carry him (don't let him walk, 'cause he'll pee as soon as he's out!) to the door you're ALWAYS going to let him out of. Carry him ALL THE WAY to the spot in the yard that you want to designate as the potty area. *I strongly suggest not having that spot be the first place your foot lands when you walk outside.* Put his feet on the ground and give the command: "Potty." He'll of-course pee right away, and you praise, praise, praise him. "Good dog! Good potty! Good potty outside!"

Now, after he's had a few minutes to noodle around outside and you're sure he's done with his potty business, bring him inside, give him food and water, and take him BACK OUTSIDE again right away, because a little puppy will poo within minutes of eating. Sometimes, they'll poo twice. So this is a small window of opportunity for outside play. Because in the beginning, outdoors is ONLY for bathroom breaks, so the puppy GETS IT. Outside is for Bio-breaks, inside is for everything else. So let the puppy run, play, sniff, and do his business. When he pees or poos, praise, praise, praise him. He's the smartest, best, cutest puppy ever born. Make sure he knows it. Then take him straight back inside.

After the puppy has done his outside-business, you have about twenty minutes to a half-hour before he'll need to do it again. So he can be *inside*, SUPERVISED BY YOU. Not by the kids, or anyone else. A good way to supervise a puppy is to clip his leash to your clothing. That way, he's wherever you are, not quietly peeing behind the potted palm. If he squats, or starts sniffing

in a suspicious manner, quickly pick him up and take him outside. When he does his business, praise, praise, praise him. (Are you noticing a pattern?)

When you can't be directly supervising the puppy, he is IN HIS CRATE. He has toys, a soft bed or blanket, so he's FINE in there. If he's howling, put him in another room. He needs to learn patience. He needs to learn to wait till you take him outside to do his business. For tiny, tiny puppies (really young, or toy breeds) you'll need to take him out every hour or two during the day, and maybe a time or two at night. Larger breed puppies, or older puppies, can go up to four hours during the day, and maybe once—or not at all—at night. If you work all day, you'll need to find someone to help, or take the puppy to work with you. If you're home all day, you can use the leashed-to-you method more often. You'll have to use your judgment, and if the puppy has an accident in the crate or the house, clean up the mess, wash everything, and DON'T fuss. *Accidents are your fault, not theirs.* Just calmly clean up the mess and resolve to do better.

If you're a light sleeper, you have the option of letting the puppy sleep on the bed with you. He'll start stirring if he needs to potty, and you can haul him quickly outside. But again, if he has an accident, remember that's your fault, not his.

As the puppy gets older (or if he's an older but untrained dog when you get him) you can begin to shorten crate time and lengthen leashed-to-you time. **Please note:** *tossing a dog out into the fenced yard for hours at a time is NOT potty training.* Remember, they need to learn that outside is for outside business and inside is for everything else. Once that is learned, the dog can learn the joys of playing outside, lying in the sun, and chasing squirrels. As you allow the puppy / dog more time indoors without being crated or leashed, it's a good idea to take him outside every two hours or so, just in case. Give the potty command every time you take him out, and he really can learn to potty on command (great when you're traveling, or when it's raining and you don't want to stand there waiting). Praise, praise, praise, when you see him do the deed, and don't fuss when he gets it wrong because it's most likely that's YOUR fault, not his. Just clean up the mess and carry on with the training.

So, now that you know the theory behind it, here's the schedule, to modify as needed: Morning—take the puppy outside to pee, let him noodle around for five-or-so minutes to make sure he doesn't also have to poo. Take him back inside. Supervised playtime. Crate.

Puppy-breakfast time, feed and water, then go back outside for another potty break. He may poo twice, so make sure you give him plenty of time. Then take him back inside. Supervised playtime. Crate.

Repeat this process as many times a day as you have to, depending on the dog's size. Every hour for tiny puppies, up to every three or four (at most) hours for large dogs.

Also repeat this process every time you feed the puppy—for a small dog or young puppy, this may be several times a day.

A few hours before bedtime, withhold water. Take the puppy out for regular bio-breaks at least twice before bedtime. That way you're sure his bladder is empty before bedtime.

Example: Take up the water bowl at 7 p.m., potty break at 8, and again at 9 or 9:30, supervised playtime inside, then crate for bedtime at 10.

Start the process all over again the next day.

Remember, puppies are babies. They need your love, your understanding, your company, and your willingness to train the puppy with gentle determination. If the puppy has an accident, it was surely your fault, not his. Decide what *you* need to do to improve. Schedule potty breaks more often? Supervise better? Withhold water earlier in the evening? Use the crate for a training tool, not for punishment, or as a replacement for your loving companionship and supervision. If you do your job right by potty training (and obedience training, too, I hope!) your puppy, you'll raise a well-mannered, loving dog who is a pleasure to all and a nuisance to none, and your dog will be assured of a happy home and loving family all the days of his life.

Good luck! You know where to find me if you need extra help.