

# Potty Training



## Problem and Solutions

*A comprehensive list of common potty-training problems and solutions.  
At the end of this list, you'll also find my 'Process for Potty Time'.*

Scott Burnley

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# Problem #1

*Accidents in different areas of the house.*

Many people tell me that their pup always seems to ‘go’ in one area of the house, such as the spare bedroom or dining room. Lots of dogs will even choose a particular corner in a specific spot in the house. Dogs are amazing creatures, and one of the things they can excel at is compartmentalization; meaning, they split things up really well in their head. They think, “I eat in the kitchen, I play in the living room, I sleep in the bedroom, and I poop in the corner of the hallway.”

## Solution

*Freedom must be earned.*

I always tell clients that a puppy’s entire world should be limited to two rooms of the house. For most, that is the kitchen and the living room. Puppies with the freedom to roam all over a 2,500 square ft. space are much harder to watch and potty train. Barricade the entrances and exits. I like to use a baby gate with a built in door (cost me \$32 at [Target](#)).

You can go the cheaper route and use cardboard boxes, big suitcases, stacks of books - anything to keep them out of the rest of the house. As they get older and their potty habits improve, you can start giving them more access to the house.

Reminder: puppies **must** be watched while in their determined areas of the house at all times for their safety, and so you can spot the signs of potty behavior (i.e. circling, sniffing the ground, hiking the leg). If you can’t watch them, they need to be in their crate.

# Problem #2

*Peeing or pooping in their crate.*

Sometimes your pup may have an issue with going in their crate. Most people have heard that dogs don't like to go where they lay, so why is your pup going in their crate?

## Solution

*Make sure the crate isn't too big.*

I really like using wire crates in the home, because they are sold with dividers that allow you to expand the space as your pup grows without having to buy a larger crate. My suggestion is to buy the size crate that your pup will need when they are fully grown. A crate should only be large enough for a dog to enter without having to crouch, walk in, turn around, and lay down. If they can do laps in their crate, it's too big. For reference, I use [Midwest Crates](#).

If they are still going potty in the correct size space, make sure you are giving them the opportunity to go based on how old they are. The general rule of thumb is that a puppy can hold its bladder as many hours as they are months old (i.e. 3 months old - can hold for 3 hours). Here's my super simple rule of thumb: *always assume your pup has to go*. Use this rule every time they wake up from a nap, every time they drink water or eat, every time they finish playing, every time they come out of the crate... basically after they do anything. This is one of many reasons owning a puppy is tough. It requires so much discipline and follow through to be successful.

If these things don't work, there could be another issue, commonly referred to as a 'dirty dog.' This isn't meant to be a derogatory term, but one used to identify a dog that spent so much time in a confined area when they were puppies (such as a crate) that the poor pup had no choice but to soil themselves. Given enough time in this environment, the dog starts to see this as normal behavior and then has no issue with soiling themselves. This is often seen with poor breeders and puppy mills, and it is a very hard issue to resolve. If you think you might have a 'dirty dog', you will

need to follow the process for potty time to the letter, and anticipate issues even then.

## Problem #3

*You take the dog out to potty, it doesn't go.*

*You bring them back in, and then they go.*

This happens to us all, especially with young puppies during the winter months. Neither you nor the dog wants to spend a ton of time outdoors.

## Solution

*Wait a few minutes, then try again.*

...but don't just leave the pup out in the house during those few minutes. Put them directly in their crate, and wait 10-15 minutes (depending on age) and then try again. Both us and dogs aren't fans of pooping where you sleep, so this encourages them to hold it until you try again.

# Problem #4

## *Excitement peeing.*

I struggled and struggled with my personal dog on this one. It seemed every time I hadn't seen her for 10 minutes and returned to pet her, she would squat all while wagging her tail. Lots of puppies have this issue; lack of bladder control when they get excited or aroused.

## Solution

### *Avoidance.*

When you first let your puppy out of their crate, don't look at them, don't speak to them, and *definitely* don't pet them. Calmly walk to the door and put on their leash and take them out. Then once the deed is done have a puppy party! Love all over them and let them know who the best dog in the world is.

Young dogs (and some older dogs) just don't have a ton of bladder control. The best advice is to know when they have to go, and avoid the temptation to let them get excited. This applies to other people, too! Often times, friends and family are the biggest obstacles to successful dog training.

A few dogs will have what's called a 'submissive pee'. They usually lose control around new people because they are a little nervous. Avoidance until after potty time is the best solution for this issue.

# Problem #5

*I want my puppy to use pee pads when I'm gone,  
but go outside when I'm home.*

## Solution

*Ditch the pee pads. Forever!*

I **never** encourage the use of pee pads to potty train a dog unless it's an all-in situation, meaning, you are only going to use pee pads forever and the dog will *never* potty outside. If you ever plan to have your pup go potty outside, you need to ditch the pee pads immediately.

First, you are encouraging the dog to go potty in the house, which is the exact opposite of your desired end result. Second, the pads are a cloth-like material, and most dogs associate a soft material such as carpet or your favorite hoodie as an acceptable alternative.

If you're thinking to yourself, *I have to leave them for extended periods of time and I want them to understand both the pad and the grass*, I hate to break it to you, but this never works. Dogs like humans will do what is easiest, and if you allow/encourage dogs to potty in the house, they will. Forever. If you can't make it back, get your neighbor, a dog walker, or Daycare facility to take care of your dog while you're gone.

No one said owning a puppy was cheap. Or easy.

# Problem #6

*They went in the house. Now what?*

Let's face facts, unless your pup has a super bladder, this is going to happen.

## Solution

*Schedule, schedule, schedule.*

Dogs thrive on structure and consistency, and potty training is no different. It's pretty simple, really; feed them at the exact same time and they will poop at the exact same time. With my personal dogs, I could always tell you what was going to happen on every potty break because I was super consistent with their feeding/drinking schedule.

Yes, I will suggest limiting water at night for puppies to help get through the night without accidents. This is not a bad thing. If you catch them in the act of going in the house, try making a really loud noise (hand clap or exclaim gibberish) to try and distract them into stopping, and then carry them outside quickly.

Do not, *I repeat*, do not get upset with the dog for going in the house. It's not their fault, it's yours (sorry, but true!). If you notice it after the fact, don't get mad, but calmly walk them outside and try to go again in their spot.

Lastly, if you own a puppy, time to invest in a carpet cleaner like [Resolve](#).

# The Process for Potty Time

*Always assume that your pup has to go potty.*

When it's time, which is always, make sure you have a treat with you and calmly walk to the door, put on their leash (yes, even those with a fenced in yard). Then, walk them to the *same* spot in the yard and give them the cue to "Go Potty."

Taking them to the same spot where they already have their scent helps them to not get distracted and lets them know "this is the area where I do my business". While in the act of pottying, I suggest verbally praise the dog for going where they're supposed to.

As soon as they are finished, immediately have a puppy party, let them know how good they are and how proud you are and give them the treat. Then repeat. Every. Single. Time...

It took me 9 months to fully potty train my Lab. That's right, a professional dog trainer struggled for months on a rudimentary part of training. This goes to show that every dog is different, and they all learn at their own pace. Follow these solutions and stay consistent, and you will be successful. Don't follow them, and call [Stanley Steamer](#).