

PUPPY POTTY TRAINING

Step-by-Step Schedule + Crate Method



The 3 Rules of Fast Potty Training

Potty training has a deserved reputation for being slow and frustrating. The truth: with strict scheduling and the crate method, most puppies are reliable in 3-6 months. The owners who fail aren't using bad methods — they're being inconsistent.

- **Schedule beats reaction.** Take the puppy out on a clock, not when you 'think they need to go.' Predictable beats hopeful.
- **The crate is your best tool.** Dogs naturally avoid soiling their sleeping area. A properly sized crate (just big enough to stand, turn, lie down) leverages this instinct.
- **Reward the success, ignore the accident.** Outdoor success = high-value treat within 2 seconds. Indoor accident = clean it with enzyme cleaner, no scolding (the puppy doesn't connect the punishment to the action).

What if I don't have a crate?

You'll potty-train a puppy 3-4x slower without one. Every professional trainer uses crates because they work. A basic wire crate costs \$40-60 and lasts the dog's lifetime.

Want video demos of the crate method?

The **Fast Dog Training** program shows the exact crate-introduction protocol with video demos. Used by 50,000+ owners.

→ [See the Training Program](#)

Hourly Potty Schedule by Age

Bladder control develops slowly. Younger puppies need more frequent breaks. This schedule assumes you're home — if you're at work, your puppy will need a midday break (paid dog walker, neighbor, or come home for lunch).

Age	Frequency (max time between breaks)	Overnight
8-10 weeks	Every 1.5 hours, plus after meals/play/sleep	1 break (set alarm 4 hours after bedtime)
10-12 weeks	Every 2 hours, plus after meals/play/sleep	1 break (alarm 5 hours after bedtime)
3-4 months	Every 2.5 hours	Most can hold 6-7 hours overnight
4-6 months	Every 3-4 hours	Most can hold 7-8 hours overnight
6+ months	Every 4-6 hours	Full night, typically 8-10 hours

Triggers that REQUIRE an immediate outdoor break (any age):

- Within 5 minutes of waking up
- Within 10 minutes of eating or drinking
- Within 5 minutes of finishing play
- When you see sniffing, circling, or squatting
- Coming out of the crate after any duration

The Crate Method (Step-by-Step)

Crate training serves two purposes: it accelerates potty training (puppy avoids soiling sleeping area) and it gives you a safe place to put the puppy when you can't actively supervise. Both are essential.

Days 1-2: Introduction

Place the crate in a busy room. Door open. Toss treats inside, let the puppy explore on their own time. Don't force entry. Goal: puppy enters the crate willingly to eat treats.

Days 3-4: Feeding

Feed all meals inside the crate, door open. The puppy should walk in calmly, eat, walk out. Most puppies are completely comfortable with the crate by Day 4.

Days 5-7: Closing the door

When the puppy is in the crate eating or chewing a toy, close the door for 30 seconds. Open before they cry. Build to: 1 minute → 5 minutes → 10 minutes → 30 minutes. Always while the puppy is calm.

Crate sizing matters

The crate must be just big enough for the puppy to stand, turn around, and lie down. Larger = puppy will potty in one corner and sleep in the other. Buy an adult-sized crate with a divider that adjusts as the puppy grows.

After Week 1

The crate becomes the puppy's safe space. Use it for: overnight sleep, when you leave the house, when you can't supervise, when the puppy is overstimulated. **Never as punishment.** The crate must always associate with safety and reward.

Stuck on crate training?

The Fast Dog Training program has video troubleshooting for every common crate issue (crying, chewing the bars, accidents inside, refusing to enter).

→ [See the Training Program](#)

Accident Troubleshooting Flowchart

Accidents are normal during training, but consistent accidents at any specific point usually have a specific cause:

Symptom	Most Likely Cause	Fix
Accidents in the crate	Crate too big OR puppy was left too long	Add a divider to shrink the space; reduce duration
Always pees in same indoor spot	Smell residue from past accident	Clean with enzyme cleaner (regular cleaners don't work); block access
Pees right after coming inside	Came inside too fast — didn't fully empty bladder	Stay outside an extra 5 minutes; play after they pee, not before
Pees when greeting people	Excitement urination (very common <6 months)	Go calmly outside; ignore the puppy for first 30 sec when guests arrive
Suddenly regresses after months of training	Medical (UTI), stress (move, new family member), or distracted by something	Leave it, for distraction by something else otherwise restart strict scheduling for 3-4 weeks
Won't go outside in rain/cold	Genuine weather aversion (especially small breeds)	Close potty area; treat outdoor success extra heavily; expect winter

Your Puppy WILL Be Reliable. Here's How.

Potty training is mostly about you, not the puppy. The puppy is doing exactly what nature designed — eliminating when their bladder is full. Your job is to make sure that bladder is full at predictable times, in predictable places (outside).

The Realistic Timeline

- **Weeks 1-4 (8-12 weeks old):** 5-15 accidents per week is normal. Strict schedule + crate.
- **Weeks 5-12 (3-5 months):** Accidents drop to 1-3 per week. Better bladder control.
- **Months 3-6:** Most puppies fully reliable in the home; occasional accidents in new environments.
- **6+ months:** Reliable across all environments. Some breeds (Bulldogs, Maltese, Yorkies) take 12+ months.

Slow-training breeds

If you have a Bulldog, Yorkie, Maltese, Shih Tzu, French Bulldog, or Bichon, plan for 6-12 months of consistent work. These breeds are notoriously slow to potty train — not because they're stubborn, but because they have small bladders and slower bladder-control development.

Get Fast Dog Training

Complete training program with potty-training video demos, crate troubleshooting, and lifetime access. The program we recommend to every PDF reader.

→ [See the Training Program](#)

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Want breed-specific potty training timelines? Visit dogtrainingbybreed.com — we have detailed pages for 50 breeds, with the exact timeline for each.