



ZEN DOG TRAINING

A Simple and Effective Guide to House Training



**Developed by Gordon Fontaine,
founder of Zen Dog Training.**

HOUSETRAINING

100% supervision is the most important factor in housetraining - inside and outside the house.



100% Supervision

Your dogs' environment should be carefully structured while he learns to feel safe and secure in your home. This means that for the first few weeks your dog should be:

- Outside — with you
- Inside and actively watched 100% of the time
- Inside his confinement area, crate or small puppy-proofed area
- Tethered — either to you or to a solid object in a puppy-proofed area

Of course, don't leave your dog unattended when tethered. If you are going away for more than 5 minutes — the amount of time it takes you to go to the bathroom, for example — he should be in his crate or confinement area.

Tools You Can't Live Without

In general, the strategy is — restrict your puppy's freedom, reward like crazy, closely monitor him and even control late night water drinking to make your point.

The essential tools are **High-Value Treats** so you can immediately reward good behaviors, a den-like **Crate** with a soft bed and toys, and a **Confinement Area** a place to leave your dog alone for any time longer than he can hold it in the crate.

In other words, don't give your dog complete freedom right way. Create a safe, comfortable place for your dog to stay when you can't watch him. Your dog has a natural tendency to keep his den clean. It's up to us to extend the den — instinctively the crate or bed he sleeps in — to mean **inside the entire home**.

It takes lots of supervision and patience to teach a dog that peeing and pooping should only take place outside. So make sure you use a **Confinement Area** and a **Crate** to make it easier for both you and your dog to understand the rules.

Please see our explanation on getting your dog comfortable with the Crate/Confinement area at the end of this document for details.

Learn Your Dog's Natural Schedule

The key to success is to understand your dog's natural cycle and not permit **any** mistakes indoors. If you do this, you can housetrain your dog in a couple of weeks.

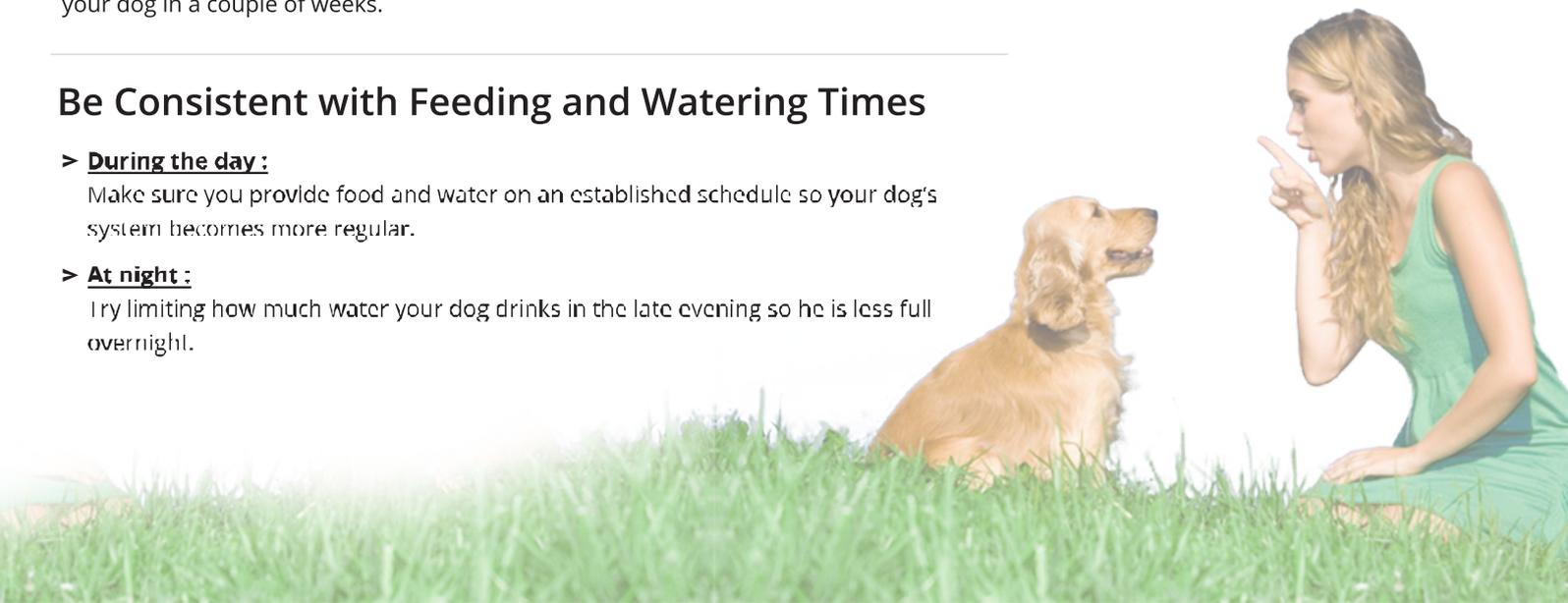
Be Consistent with Feeding and Watering Times

> **During the day :**

Make sure you provide food and water on an established schedule so your dog's system becomes more regular.

> **At night :**

Try limiting how much water your dog drinks in the late evening so he is less full overnight.



Make a Record of Eliminating and Feeding Activities :

Create a log of when your dog makes mistakes or goes pee and poop. Try using a dry-erase board or calendar mounted near the door. This is smart because it lets you

- learn your dog's natural rhythm quickly — at what times does he tend to pee, poop, eat or drink a lot of water
- communicate to the rest of the family if your dog has “gone” yet
- helps you identify ‘trouble’ times of the day when mistakes happen

Know the Likely Times When Your Dog Needs to go Potty :

- The very first thing in the morning!
- Small puppies can be carried directly from the crate to avoid an accident
- 20-40 minutes after eating
- After drinking — even if he just went!
- After waking from a nap
- After being let out of the crate
- Every hour for young dogs under 10 weeks
- After any breaks from activities like playing hard, frantic running around or a long chew session with a bone
- If he starts wondering around away from your watchful eye
- If he starts sniffing the floor or circling
- The very last thing before going to bed



Important Facts to Remember

- > Most puppies can “hold it” for approximately as many hours as they are old in months, i.e. 2 month old puppy: 1-2 hours, 3 month old puppy: 2-3 hours, 4 month old puppy: 4-5 hours, etc.
- > Dogs can “hold it” for many hours at a time but anything beyond 5-6 hours can be uncomfortable, please hire a dog walker or get help!
- > Your dog can probably “hold it” all night while he’s sleeping, but when he’s awake — just like us — he’ll need to go more often.
- > Smaller breeds have smaller bladders and therefore can’t “hold it” as long
- > If your puppy is “going” in his crate – you are probably leaving him in for too long!

Listen to Your Dog

The real trick to houstraining is reading your dog's body language both at home and on walks. Sometimes when you're on a potty-break walk with your dog, a car may drive by and interrupt his concentration on the task at hand. You may not notice that he is full and looking for a “safe” place to go. If you miss his signals, decide that he doesn't need to go and take him back in the house; you may find that your dog went on the carpet.

Other times, people don't acknowledge their dogs peeing inside Eh! Eh!” (to stop them in the act) or outside “Yes! Good Boy!” (to reward them) — even when the dogs do it right in front of them!

The moral of the story is: pay attention to your dog so you can reward behaviors you like and prevent (or interrupt) behaviors you don't!

Recognize the Signs Your Dog Gives You :

Learn your dog's signs for when he's full or ready to go. Does he sniff around? Circle areas of the floor? Pacing near the door? Make sure you're taking your dog on walks frequently enough.

These behaviors indicate that he needs to go:

- Sniffing the ground
- Circling
- Whining
- Pacing
- Walking over to an area where he has gone in the past
- Acting agitated or more excited than usual

Dogs Can Develop Weird Elimination Habits :

Strange, but true! You should familiarize your puppy with all sorts of places and situations to reduce the chances of him developing a strange pooping or peeing habit.

For example, a dog may only poop on grass, or when something like a twig or branch "tickles" his butt. This can be a real problem in the city or during the winter — things are covered in snow and he won't be able to find the right conditions to meet his needs.

Experiment with Different Conditions to Prevent Unwanted Habits :

- If you have a backyard, try having your dog to pee while leashed to prepare for when that may be necessary.
- Take extra time and care to teach your dog to pee in the rain or when it's cold and wet... especially if you live in Boston or Seattle!
- City-dwellers should encourage your dogs to go on the pavement or cement — looking for grass in downtown NYC may be tough.

The Process of Housetraining Your Puppy :

Always go with your dog — even if you have a backyard — so you can actively teach him. You should reward good work with praise and a treat. Treats will be phased out later.

Immediately reward all outdoor behavior with treats. Don't wait until you come back in the house — by then, it's too late. You have a 1-2 second window to praise and reward.

Wait until your dog has finished before you start praising him. Don't even crinkle the treat bag. You don't want to interrupt good behavior, so start praising when he's finishing up. Reward immediately and make sure to use high value treats!

Use lots of praise, treats, and occasionally — especially in the beginning — give your dog a huge jackpot for eliminating outside. A jackpot is two or three treats given out in a row!

If Your Dog Doesn't Go on a Certain Outing :

Give yourself a few minutes outside if there's no action, bringing your dog back into the house, give him a chew toy and crate him for 10-30 minutes. Go about your regular routine while your dog is crated — shower, shave, prepare your lunch. When enough time has passed, then take him outside again for 5-10 minutes. Repeat this until your dog finally pees or poops. This prevents you from spending hours outside waiting for him to pee or poop and it puts you in control of your schedule.

If your dog is easily distracted, act boring and try not to engage him when he's outside to do his business. If he picks up a stick, gently interrupt him and then encourage him back to sniffing — that said, while teaching your dog to go outside, try not to have too much interaction. Do not stare at your dog, just cross your arms and look away...while still keeping an eye on him. You don't want to do anything that might break his concentration.

Cleaning :

Clean all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner like Nature's Miracle. Dogs have an enzyme in their pee and poop that indicates whether they have gone here before and that it was safe, so they tend to go again on the same spots. Remember: dogs don't learn right and wrong — they learn safe and unsafe — enzymatic cleaners are essential for housetraining.

Dramatic Increases of Mistakes :

- Your puppy may simply be regressing, so increase the frequency of outings for a week or so. Then, gradually build up the duration between outings
- Consider calling your vet; this could be a physical problem, like a urinary tract infection



When your puppy is peeing or pooping in the house :

- Interrupt the action verbally — “Eh-eh!!!” — at the very moment that he begins to squat and then immediately bring him outside
- Puppies can be picked up and whisked outdoors
- Don’t punish him in this moment — just interrupt him
- Praise and reward him if he finishes eliminating outside

Many people want to add a special cue or code word that helps your dog pee on command, like “Hurry up” or “Do your business.” Whatever you choose to say, make sure you say it immediately before he starts to pee or poop.

Note: If you have a dog who is easily distracted, then he may not be a good candidate for using cue words.

Accidents at Other People’s Homes :

If your puppy only has elimination issues while visiting other people, follow the basic plan — limiting freedom, providing constant supervision, and giving high value treats for outdoor elimination.

Closely supervise your dog at any new environment to establish that house rules extend there too. Consider teaching him to use a signal at your own home — like ringing a bell — then bring that system to other locations.

Anyway, Here’s How You Do It... :

- Hang a bell on the door that you use to take your dog outside.
- Always ring this bell right before you let him outside. There’s no need to add any words at first; try this for 3-4 days while you implement the plan.

Creating a “Cue” Signal for Your Puppy to Communicate :

Some people choose to train their puppies to signal when they want to go to the bathroom. This can be as simple as nudging or pawing something hanging on the back door, like a bell that your dog can ring to let you know when his ready. Then you can take that same bell with you to new locations.

The problem with teaching your dog to ask to go out is that your dog learns to ring the bell to get you to take him outside. That kind of “you-do-for-me” relationship isn’t a great dynamic for future obedience training. After all, who is listening to whom?

Bottom line, if you teach your dog the bell-ringing trick, it’s highly likely that he’ll use it all the time to get what he wants.

In essence, **you** are obeying your dog when he rings the bell.

ABOUT CRATES

People are really polarized on this issue. They either understand the value of a crate, or think it is inhumane and cruel. The truth is, your dog — who is already a “den animal” and naturally seeks cozy, safe shelter — will at some point find himself in a crate. It may have to happen at the vet, at the groomer, while you are on vacation, during unexpected house construction, etc.

Remember: your dog is not a furry little person. He is a domesticated animal and human companion. Still, most dogs will spend 95% of their waking life locked up in your house — and when you aren't there, your big cozy house may just as well be a giant lonely crate.

Respect your dog as the social pack animal that he is — don't leave him alone for more than 5-6 hours at a time. Be kind to your dog by preparing him to be calm and quiet while in the crate. Being alone doesn't come naturally to dogs, so it's our job to help them understand our busy schedules.



How to Introduce Your Dog to a Crate :

Introduce your puppy to a crate as soon as possible — have one ready when he first arrives at your house. Get your dog familiar and comfortable with the crate by doing the following:

- Let your puppy practice going in and out by putting little treats in the crate.
- Once he is comfortable with step 1, wait a few seconds while he is in the crate before giving him another treat.
- When your dog is at ease, close crate's door and treat him. Get him comfortable with being like this for a few seconds, then move on to step 4.
- Stretch your puppy's time in the crate up to 5-10 minutes with the door closed. Leave long lasting chew toys or Food Acquisition Devices (FADs) in the crate with your dog.
- Once your puppy adjusts to 5-10 minutes in the crate, stretch the time up to 30-60 minutes. Sit near the crate while he's inside. Read from your favorite book, work on the computer, watch TV, etc.
- When he's used to 30-60 minutes of crate time, stretch the experience further. Put your puppy in the crate while you go about your business in the house, moving in and out of his sight. Be sure to build up his tolerance by revisiting the crate every few minutes.



Don't forget: only give attention to your puppy when he is calm.

It is important to gradually build up your dog's acceptance to you leaving him alone. You can't supervise his every move every second of the day — you need time to do human things like work, eat and go out. Not only that, you also want peace of mind that your dog will be safe, and if any accidents happen, they will be easy to clean up and manage.

Keep in mind:

- If you need to crate your dog for longer than he can “hold it,” use a confinement area instead.
- If you are going away for 7-8 hours or if your dog is too young to sleep through the night, use a confinement area.



Confinement Areas :

Confinement areas offer the same benefits as a crate — a safe and secure place where your puppy can stay in relative comfort. The major difference is that a confinement area is a bigger space, such as a pen or an area like a kitchen with baby gates.

Dogs have a natural tendency to classify place where they eat and sleep as their “den.” Dogs aren’t inclined to soil their dens, so it’s useful to think that the goal of housetraining is to teach your dog that his den extends to being inside your home or any building.

At first your dog will feel that just his crate is his den. However, if you supervise your dog, reward him when he pees or poops outside, and use special cleaning agents inside, you can help him learn that outside is where you want him to eliminate.

You should gradually increase the size of your puppy’s living area, or what he considers to be his den space. Move training from the kitchen to the dining room, then include the living room, bedroom and wherever new room you want to introduce to your dog.

Feed him and do training games in the new spaces — move his toys, bed and water bowl into the new spaces as well. If your dog makes a mistake or relapses, go back to the last space in which he successfully stayed and start again.

About Tethering :

Tethering both inside and outside is a great way to restrict your dog’s mobility. You can tether him to furniture, trees, your body, or even leave a short tether — a “drag line” — on him while he’s in the house. It will drag on the floor behind him, enabling you to step on the line whenever you need to restrain your dog.

Remember: Using a tether does not legitimize ignoring your puppy! Never leave your dog alone when he is tethered — make sure he is safe and not going to hurt himself.

Conclusion :

Puppy housetraining could take as few as 4-7 days if you’re really consistent about using the crate, monitoring him, restricting his freedom and really encouraging good behaviors — outside, with treats, the instant he gets it.

Realistically, your dog has an adaptive mind, he will test the rules, so don’t deviate from your training plan for a few months. It will be hard for older dogs to learn the new rules — think how long it would take you to start using an outhouse instead of indoor plumbing?

Bottom line: it’s up to you to teach your dog the rules. Use understanding, praise, patience and lots of treats to encourage your dog to learn quickly!

