

# Perfect Puppy in **7** Days:

How to Start Your Puppy Off Right

by

Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS



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# Perfect Puppy in Seven Days: How to Start Your Puppy Off Right

By **Sophia Yin, DVM, MS**

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: **REMEMBER TO FILL IN**

ISBN: 978-0-9641518-6-4

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**Photographers:** Sophia Yin and Melissa Morris

**Graphic Designers:** Larry and April Kimmerly ([www.pkcreate.com](http://www.pkcreate.com))

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## Chapter 4

# A Foolproof Potty Training Program

One of the most trying tasks associated with having a puppy is potty training. >>

## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program

**Some people think potty training is as easy** as just keeping the pup on a regular eating, drinking and potty-outing schedule where she is taken out every several hours. Or they think the pup will be completely housetrained in just a week or two. For some precocious pups this might be so; however, many puppies taken through such a lax, abbreviated potty protocol remain only partially housetrained, or they have potty accidents for months. These little Rovers learn that pottying outside is good, but they do not understand that inside is out of bounds. In fact, they may even come inside after an extensive play or exercise period and relieve themselves on your expensive carpet.

That's because potty training is not only about training where to go. It is also about making it clear that other places are inappropriate, until pottying only in the right locations becomes a habit.

Does this seem odd to you? The same rules apply in our human world. For instance, in Paris public restrooms abound. There's easy access and they are clean. However, men prefer to randomly urinate in public on the walls. To help train men that it's inappropriate to urinate in public, the city has installed "pee walls" that cause the urine to splash on their feet, and have officers assigned to a Bad Behavior Brigade who ticket public pee-ers. They are saying no no to oui oui and making it difficult for men to potty in the wrong locations, in hopes that the men will form a habit of only going in the right places.

In this section I'll show you a foolproof potty training plan that works even for breeds known to be difficult to housetrain.

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*“Potty training is more than just taking your puppy out every few hours. It requires you control the puppy's environment and schedule so he does not have the chance to have accidents.”*

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### Potty Training Tips

#### Prevention Is the Key

The key to potty training is taking your young puppy out frequently (on average every two hours for an eight-week-old puppy) and never giving her the opportunity to have a potty accident. That means at least eight trips a day!

To avoid giving your pup the opportunity to potty inside, when she's in the house she should always either be

- **in her crate**
- **in a puppy-safe and potty-safe playpen** with a potty area that contains a preferred potty surface (such as fake grass or pee pads)
- **attached to you by a leash** so she can't wander off to potty in the house
- **or under your direct supervision** in an enclosed area. Direct supervision means you are looking at her at all times. The minute you turn away, she'll have a potty accident.

Stick to this plan for a month straight and she'll reliably develop the habit of going outside and holding it inside. Then continue keeping a close eye on her for another couple of months, especially when you take her on outings to other people's homes, before declaring her completely potty trained.

## 4.1 Potty training starts with learning to love and sleep in a crate (or other small, enclosed area).

The goal of crate training is that your puppy learns to love resting in her crate.



Fig. 4.1A

**Crate:** Your puppy should sleep in her crate at night and take naps in it during the day. To train her to love her crate, you can make it comfortable with a blanket and place treats inside at random times. Then give her toys and pet her when she's in it before you close the door. The ultimate goal of crate training is that she goes into the crate on her own or when you give her a verbal cue, rather than needing to be shoved or coaxed in. And once she's in, she remains calm, relaxed and quiet. (If you have problems with this, download the crate training handout at [www.drSophiaYin.com](http://www.drSophiaYin.com).)



Fig. 4.1B

**Crate size:** The crate should be big enough for the puppy to lie down and turn around but not big enough for a separate potty area. You can make the crate smaller by placing a box in it and, as the puppy grows, enlarge the crate by using a smaller box.

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*“The goal of crate training is that your puppy learns to love resting in her crate.”*

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## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program

### 4.1.1 Crates and whining.

Most puppies whine the first time they are crated. They aren't used to having restricted access to their family. It's important that puppies learn that being separated or confined is okay,



Fig. 4.1C



Fig. 4.1D

**Provide puppies with something positive while they are in their crates.** You can place treats and some of your puppy's meal in the crate every time you put her in, so that she associates being in the crate with positive experiences. You can even place a portion of her meal in a Kong® toy. Mix a little canned food with kibble so she has to work to get the food out

If you are diligent about the crate training early on, the whining should stop within a week. If you reward your puppy by letting her out when she whines, the whining could develop into serious anxiety or barrier frustration that prevents you from being able to leave your dog alone in another room or alone in the house.

### Tips for Preventing and Dealing with Whining Puppies

- Avoid letting puppies out of their crates when they are barking or whining, or you'll reward the barking/whining behavior and it will get worse. Instead, wait until they are quiet to let them out.
- You can also reward your puppy for quiet behavior by tossing treats into her crate when she's quiet or opening the door and giving her attention when she's quiet.
- Be sure to put treats and some of your puppy's meal in the crate every time you put her in, so that she associates being in the crate with positive experiences (Figure 4.1C). You can even place a portion of her meal in a Kong® toy. Mix a little canned food with kibble so she has to work to get the food out (Figure 4.1D).
- If you are unsure whether the amount of whining is normal, consult an animal behavior specialist immediately ([www.avsabonline.org](http://www.avsabonline.org), [www.dacvb.org](http://www.dacvb.org) or [www.animalbehaviour.org](http://www.animalbehaviour.org)) before the whining develops into an expensive and noisy problem.
- Some exceptional breeders train their puppies to love sleeping in a crate alone even before they adopt them out. If possible, see if your breeder will start the crate training before you pick your puppy up to take her home.

## 4.2 Potty Training Requires a Regular Schedule and Getting Puppy to Her Potty Spot Quickly



Fig. 4.2A

**First thing in the morning:** When you let your pup out of her crate, rush her to her potty spot before she has a chance to squat and pee. If you're not sure that she can hold it long enough to make it outside, carry her out.

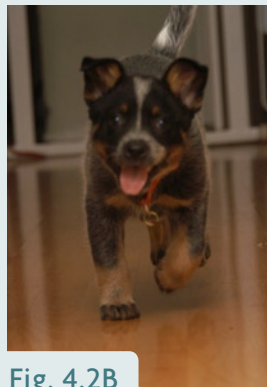


Fig. 4.2B

**Rush her out to her potty spot:** If you take her out without a leash, walk briskly or run down the hall so she doesn't have a chance to stop. She may have to be on leash so she doesn't have a chance to stop. Even a one-second stop will give her an opportunity to squat and potty inside. That means if you have stairs, it's best to carry her, since her hesitation right before the first stair is enough to allow her to squat and pee.

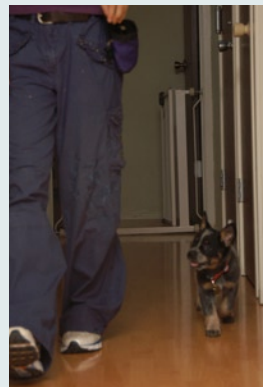


Fig. 4.2C

**Stand around until she potties:** Once outside, keep her on a leash so she can't wander and get distracted, or alternatively place her in a small confined area outside. Stand silently until she potties. When she does, praise, pet her or give her a treat as she's finishing. Just be careful you don't distract her from finishing. If after five minutes she doesn't potty, put her in her crate for 15 minutes and then try again. Repeat this 20-minute procedure until she potties outside. After she has pottied, you can play with her.

Note: This can be tedious at first. Consider listening to music or a book on tape while you wait, and also having a timer so you don't get impatient for the five minutes outside. If your puppy doesn't potty the first time, remember to take her back out for a second try after 15 minutes in her crate.

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## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program

### 4.2.1 How Often Should You Take Her Out?



Fig. 4.2.1A

**Start with every two hours for an eight-week-old puppy.** Eight-week-old puppies can be crated for up to two hours during the day and through the entire night when they are sleeping. In general, during the day, puppies can be crated the same number of hours as their age in months. For example, a three-month-old puppy can be crated three hours at a time, if she hasn't had a large drink of water just before going in.



Fig. 4.2.1B

**Take her out after a nap:** In addition to the two-hour rule, take the puppy out whenever she wakes up from sleeping or first comes out of her crate or playpen.

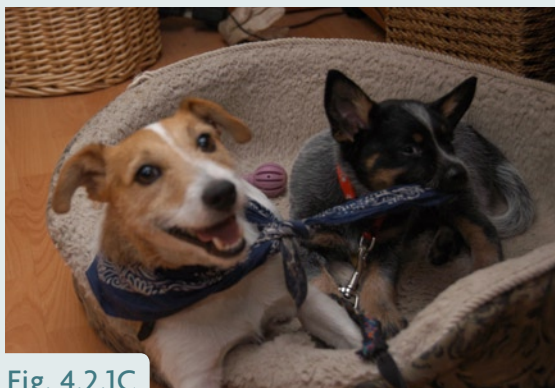


Fig. 4.2.1C

**Take her out to potty after a play session:** If she doesn't go potty, you can put her in her crate for 15 to 30 minutes and then take her out again.

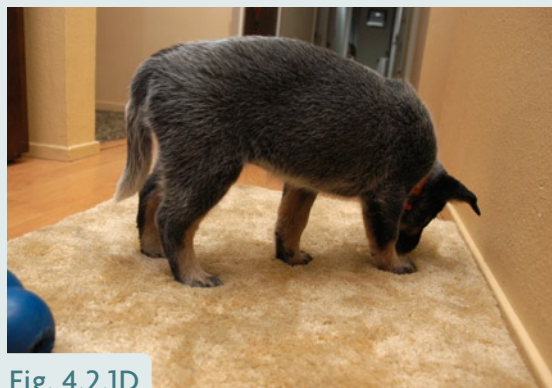


Fig. 4.2.1D

**Take her out when her body language says she's searching for a spot to pee:** Signs that they are about to potty may be subtle. Typically they start sniffing the ground, circle, or wander away.

## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program



Fig. 4.2.1E

**After a drink:** Take her out to potty 10 to 20 minutes after she's had a drink of water. Remove her water about an hour before you take her out for her last potty trip of the day, so she can go through the night without pottying. She should be able to make it through the night for seven to eight hours.



Fig. 4.2.1F

**Learn from your mistakes:** Puppies have to potty seemingly a million times a day. Learn to predict when your puppy will need to go, and expect to have accidents. Each time she has an accident, you should learn from the experience and avoid making the same mistake again. Potty training is about establishing a habit of going to a potty spot whenever the dog has to go potty and never giving her the opportunity to have an accident inside.

## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program

### 4.2.2 Adding the cue to go potty.

When you can reliably predict when she is about to potty, you can add a cue word. Say “go potty” in a clear, encouraging voice just once, right before you think she will squat. If you can reliably say it within a couple of seconds before she has to squat, she will come to learn that “go potty” means she should do #1 or #2. Avoid saying the cue over and over, or it will just become noise to her.

### 4.3 Potty Training Requires Constant Supervision

Until she's reliable, the puppy must be directly supervised or attached to you with a hands-free leash or near you on leash or resting in a playpen. Alternatively, she can be outside in a potty-safe and puppy-safe area. This may help her learn to potty when you are not outside to watch her. But avoid leaving her outside unsupervised for hours at a time. Also realize that young puppies are less able to withstand warm and cold temperatures.



## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program



Fig. 4.3A

**Lucy is attached to me by a leash:** This way she's always nearby, even when I'm moving from place to place. She's less likely to have a potty accident if she's right next to me because she's always in my sight and I can rush her outside. She's also less likely to get into trouble—chew inappropriate objects, climb on furniture, bother the other dog—because she's under my direct control and supervision.



Fig. 4.3B

**Here she's attached by leash to furniture near me:** From this position I can easily reward her for sitting or lying down quietly, and see that she's not wandering away to potty or chew an inappropriate object.

## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program



Fig. 4.3C

**Make sure your pup has plenty of toys to keep her entertained:** Wherever she's stationed, she should have lots of toys to chew on. If she grabs inappropriate items, such as your shoes or paper, remove them from her mouth and out of her range and place one of her puppy-approved items in her mouth. Similar to a two-year-old child, you'll have to repeat this toy trade many times for her to get the idea.

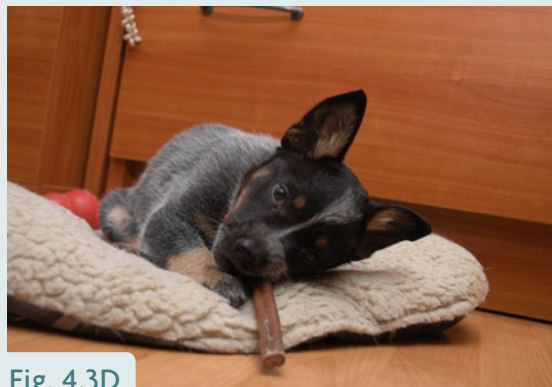


Fig. 4.3D

**Make sure she has things to chew on:** Here Lucy's chewing on a puppy-safe chew toy—a bully stick. An assortment of toys is essential for a developing puppy mind. When Lucy gets down to a final piece that's small enough to swallow whole but large enough to get stuck in her esophagus, stomach or intestines, I'll take the chew toy away.

## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program



Fig. 4.3E

**Playpen:** An alternative to crating when you're gone for longer periods of time is a puppy-safe playpen. It has her rug, water, toys and a potty spot covered with pee pads. Hopefully, she'll choose to potty on the pads if she can't wait to go outside. The goal with a playpen is that the puppy develops a substrate preference; she'll prefer to keep her bed clean and potty on the surface that is different from her bed.

Lucy's already used to pottying on artificial grass in the yard, so an indoor grass potty system might be a good substrate to use in her playpen.



Fig. 4.3F

### What happens without eagle-eye supervision?

Here's what happened when I let Lucy wander off leash for 20 seconds. Before this accident, she'd had no accidents for the first three days. On the fourth day I let her wander around off leash in a room with me three times. She had accidents two of those times, even though she had pottied outside five minutes earlier and was only out of my gaze for about 30 seconds. You can't keep your eye on a puppy every instant, unless the puppy is attached to you. All other times the puppy should be in her crate, in a playpen, tethered near you, or in a location where it's okay to go potty.



Fig. 4.3G

### Outside in a potty-safe, puppy-safe yard:

This will give her practice being independent and may help get her used to pottying in your absence outside. Make sure there are plenty of appropriate toys in the yard. But avoid leaving her unsupervised for long periods of time, especially in hot or cold weather. During her first week, Lucy spent 15 to 20 minutes at a time on her own outside in a fenced-in yard. Here she's playing with her squeaky toy.

## Chapter 4: A Foolproof Potty Training Program



Fig. 4.3H

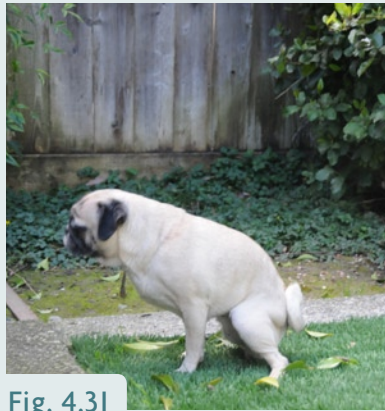


Fig. 4.3I



Fig. 4.3J

**If you want, you can spy on your puppy and if you see her potty outside, you can reward her remotely with a Treat&Train or MannersMinder remote-controlled kibble and treat dispenser.**

First train her that treats come out of the machine. You control the release of treats by pressing the dispense button on a remote control (Fig 4.3 H). Then, put the machine outside with her and watch her from inside. When you see her potty outside, dispense treats as a reward. Here's an example with an older dog. (Fig 4.3I and Fig 4.3J) [www.MannersMinder.net](http://www.MannersMinder.net)

## 4.4 What Happens When There's an Accident?



Fig. 4.4A

**Interrupt your puppy:** Try to interrupt her by making a sharp, guttural “ah”. Don’t yell or punish her. This can just teach her to avoid pottying in front of you or to be afraid of you. Don’t even use “ah” if it scares her. Instead, whisk your puppy up (Figure 4.4A).

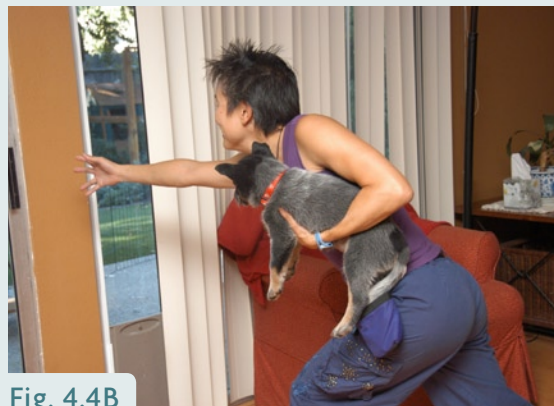


Fig. 4.4B

**Get her outside:** Rush outside as quickly as possible (Figure 4.4B)!



Fig. 4.4C

**Reward good behavior:** Set her down in an appropriate potty spot and reward her something she likes when she potties (Figure 4.4C). After she has pottied you can play with her. Then vow to watch her more carefully next time.



Fig. 4.4D

**Clean up:** Clean the accident by sopping it up with a rag or a paper towel. Then soak the carpet or wipe the floor with an enzymatic cleaner so the area does not smell like pee or poop to your puppy (Figure 4.4D). Examples of two good products are Petastic and Anti-Icky Poo (by Master Mex).

## 4.5 What to do with Little Dogs or Puppies Who Dislike Going Outside to Potty in Cold Weather?

Some dogs dislike going outside in cold or wet weather, which can make potty training a challenge. This is where it really would have been useful if the breeder or early caretaker had provided the puppies with short positive exposures to cold or wet weather and wet grass or muddy surfaces before you took your puppy home. You can work on training your puppy to be more tolerant of the harsher environments by taking her out into situations that she can still tolerate and play in these environments. Alternatively you can train her to potty inside on an indoor potty system.



Fig. 4.5A

**Using an indoor potty system:** One way to train puppies to use an indoor potty system such as this fake grass system is to leave them in an exercise pen in which one portion contains the bed and the other portion contains the potty system. Make sure that there's a clear difference between the soft resting surface of the bed and the potty surface. Puppies will tend to potty on the surface that is different from their bed.

### Potty Training Tips

**Potty training is about making it easy for the dog to potty outside and never providing an opportunity for her to go inside.** If you can do this for a month, your puppy will have an established habit.

- Remember, the puppy doesn't understand that pottying in the house is wrong, any more than an infant understands that pooping in their diapers is gross. So don't scold the pup for your mistake. (You should have been watching.) Doing so is likely to teach the pup only to avoid pottying in your presence, and instead to have potty accidents behind your back.
- Even though puppies will try to keep their sleeping area and den area clean, if they are confined too long or have had too much water before being placed in their crate, they will still have accidents in the crate.
- If your puppy has an accident, just calmly clean it up and then figure out where you went wrong. Was she unsupervised? Did you miss her cues? Was she wandering freely? Then try to avoid making the same mistake again.

In her first week with me, Lucy only had two potty accidents. In both cases, they occurred when I got sloppy with the schedule and wasn't supervising her well.