



SAN FRANCISCO  
SPCA

## Post-Adoption Puppy Housetraining Checklist



- Very strongly recommended to crate-train puppy – vital for both housetraining and chew-training
- Crate-training exploits puppy's instinct to keep his bed clean – gradually tones up his flabby little puppy muscles
- Puppy muscles weaker, bladder smaller, frequent meals – much more frequent elimination
- Other likely elimination times:
  - First thing in the morning (very first thing)
  - After eating
  - After waking from a nap
  - Young puppies (8 – 10W) usually need to go out every hour at least
  - Last thing before bed
- If puppy doesn't eliminate on any particular outing, crate him with a chew toy to avoid an accident (puppy is full or near full!) try again in 30 minutes
- Do not leave puppy in crate too long as this will force him to soil it and may result in a ruining of his tendency to want to keep it clean
- Crate duration rules of thumb (very general guidelines)
  - 8 – 10 week old puppies: one hour at a time in crate max
  - 11 - 12 week old puppies: two hours at a time in crate max
  - 13-16 week old puppies three hours at a time in crate max
  - 17 – 20+ week old puppies four hours at a time in crate max
- Use a long-term confinement area for times that are longer than the puppy can hold in the crate
- Kitchen is ideal confinement area – not too large, high traffic, easy-to-clean floor. Confine with pet-proof gates – newspaper at one end; bed, food, water, toys at other

- Accompany puppy to eliminate – *go with him* rather than sending him so that:
  - 1) you know whether he's gone or not
  - 2) you can reward at the right instant – praise and small food treat as he finishes
- Go to the same spot to make it easier, or at least the same kind of surface
- Praise and reward all outdoor elimination for first few several weeks – later can slack off (okay to continue praising)
- Interrupt him (“Ah! Ah! Let’s go outside!”) at the *start* of any mistakes indoors, then hustle him outside to finish. If he finishes outside, praise and reward this. Note: *interrupt*, not punish. Punishment is not a good idea in early relationship with a new dog, and of dubious value at any time. And, even more importantly, if the puppy makes a mistake unsupervised, never, ever punish – there is zero connection to the act that happened many dozens, hundreds or even thousands of behaviors ago
- Clean all accidents thoroughly with an enzymatic cleanser (e.g. Nature’s Miracle)
- After two or three weeks with no accidents whatsoever, add one extra room of house and supervise closely. If puppy successful, add more room every two or three weeks
- Starting at age three months, gradually extend the duration between outings – add one half hour every week or two. If puppy starts having accidents, back off and do more frequent outings for a couple of weeks, then try again
- It is reasonable to expect an adult dog to hold on 4 – 5 hours max. Of course, many dogs *can* hold on longer but is it humane to make them?
- If you are having difficulties, call our help line (554-3075) or, to get a behavior counselor, visit [www.sfspca.org](http://www.sfspca.org) for our Academy Alumni referral list

## **Crate and Confinement Training Pointers**

- Begin crate training right away – first day home
- Practice puppy going in for small, tasty food treats
- When puppy comfortable going in, practice waiting a few seconds inside before getting treat – then practice closing door
- Gradually extend time in crate to 10 minutes with door open and closed
- Put crate next to sofa, rent video and keep puppy in crate next to you while he works on stuffed Kongs and other chewies (pig’s ears, rawhides etc.)
- Put puppy in crate for 30 minutes with chewies while you’re home going about routine – visit puppy at crate every 5 – 10 minutes to reassure

- Start leaving puppy alone in crate – the first few times you do this, he should be **tired** (just exercised), the time should be **short** (15-30 minutes) and he should have a good **chewie**
  
- Get pup out to eliminate as soon as you come home after an absence