



SAN FRANCISCO
SPCA

Post-Adoption Adult Housetraining Checklist



- Expect confusion & mistakes first few days even in a trained dog
- Vital to use a crate and/or a confinement area so as to not allow opportunities for accidents first week or two – also helps chew-training efforts. Set dog up to succeed
- If using a crate, it should be just large enough for dog to turn around in and stretch out
- If using a confinement area, confine to one uncarpeted room (kitchen ideal) with pet-proof gates
- Can always relax the regime later but very tough to start relaxed and then try to tighten up if there's a problem – set dog up for success in early weeks
- Provide extra opportunities to eliminate outside:
 - First thing in the morning
 - After eating
 - Every 2 – 3 hours
 - Last thing before bed
 - If dog doesn't eliminate on any particular outing, try again an hour later
- Accompany dog 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 days – later can slack off (okay to continue praising)
- Praise and reward every time he gets it right
- 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 dog 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)
- Add one extra room of house at a time every few days if dog is successful – supervise closely every time a room is added

- Gradually extend the duration between opportunities, adding ~a half hour per week
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 for our Academy Alumni referral list
- Sudden onset of indoor elimination in a trained dog may indicate a medical problem – consult your veterinarian immediately before getting behavior help

Crate and Confinement Training Pointers

- Begin crate and/or dog-proofed confinement practice right away – first day home
- Practice doing in for small, tasty food treats
- When dog comfortable going in, practice closing door for 1 – 2 seconds for a treat
- Put crate next to sofa, rent video and keep dog in crate next to you while he works on stuffed Kongs and other chewies (pig's ears, rawhides etc.)
- If using confinement area, hang out with dog there, reading while dog works chewies
- The first two or three times the dog is left alone in the crate or confinement area, he should be **tired** (just exercised), the time should be **short** (15-30 minutes) and he should have a good **chewie**

