

YOUR PUPPY'S NEW HOME

Houses are made for people - not dogs - and so one of the first steps you need to take when you bring the puppy home to meet the rest of the family is to "puppy-proof" your house. Doing this beforehand can save a lot of frustration with your young canine.



Puppies are forever running into and over things, and your crystal, glass and ceramic knickknacks will be no exception. Electrical cords and scatter rugs are, from the puppy's perspective, wonderful teething opportunities. Carpets feel like the grass outside, only better, so why bother to go out to relieve himself?

If you plan to spend your time training and bonding with your pup instead of patching up one disaster after another, then pick up, put away, or restrict the pup's access to carpeting, doo-dads and hanging cords and tassels.

Plan from Day #1 where the dog will and will not be permitted to go, and don't deviate from it. As a general rule, keep the dog off the sofa, chairs and beds unless you make a commitment to a lot of extra cleaning and refurbishing. Don't blame the dog! He would never have curled up on the sofa if someone hadn't either coaxed him or decided not to correct him. Mind you, I'm not saying it's wrong to let your dog on the bed or sofa - that's where mine stay! But on a muddy day, I know I'll have a lot of extra work both before and after they come into the house.

Before your puppy comes home you should have acquired a "crate" or, at the very least, a portable gate to fence off a portion of the house for the puppy. You should crate the puppy whenever you cannot supervise his activities.

Some people will look at a standard dog crate made of metal or plastic and erroneously assume it's cruel to confine a dog to a small space. In fact, getting your puppy accustomed to a crate has many benefits for both of you. First, it give a dog a sense of enclosed shelter and security, which it would seek in the wild. (Many an adult dog still retreats to the relative peace and safety of his open crate when the house is full of noisy visitors.) Second, it keeps a young dog from getting into unforeseen trouble when you're not around. And third, it is a tremendous aid in housebreaking.

It is not, however, an instant housebreaking solution. While it's generally true that a dog will not soil the place where he sleeps, it can take a while for a puppy to catch on to that idea. For that reason, for house training a puppy I prefer a plastic crate with nothing but the puppy in it - no toys, food or blankets. The plastic cleans up easily, and contains the mess until I can get to it.



As puppies and cleaning are synonymous, so are puppies and staining. If you're a finicky housekeeper, prepare yourself for extra work. For help in dealing with assorted stains and disasters, a very good book to read is [Pet Clean Up Made Easy](#), by Don Aslett. It contains excellent suggestions for preventing, cleaning and controlling any animal mess.



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While many dogs spend most of their lives indoors, outdoor shelters are certainly acceptable provided certain conditions are met. In my opinion, tying or chaining a dog to a stake with a kennel house nearby is not acceptable. The reasons I do not care for this approach are twofold. First, it leaves your dog vulnerable to theft or harm by strangers. Second, if your dog is teased or agitated by someone, it could bite or otherwise harm a person. Dogs have "fight or flight" instincts - if they feel threatened and can find no avenue out, they will almost certainly turn and attack. You may say, well and good, no one should be trespassing by your dog anyway. But the law will take a dim view of your dog's actions if a child or another innocent party is hurt - from a legal perspective, you did not take reasonable precautions to protect people on your property.

In my opinion, a proper outside kennel would consist of a six by ten foot concrete slab, surrounded by a chain link fence six to seven feet high with a chain link top. Inside the enclosure there should be a leak-proof, insulated house with a door the dog can easily pass through. And put a padlock on the chain link gate. It's best if all of this is inside a fenced yard. Yes, it takes a lot of work and money, but that's how important it is for me to protect my dogs from urbanization. Someone can still come in and harm them when I'm gone, but at least I've taken reasonable precautions to avoid this.