



Puppy Raising

# Toileting routine guidance

Version 1.2

Updated September 2024



# 1. Toileting routine guidance

## In this section

In this section, you'll learn how to cue your puppy to go to the toilet and develop a reliable toileting routine. By the end of your puppy raising journey, we would ideally like your puppy to:

- Be clean in the house and comfortable relieving at home.
- Have a good understanding of the "busy-busy" cue and be comfortable when it is used.
- Have a predictable routine where they do not toilet when out socialising on lead, unless asked to so by the handler or with indication.
- Be comfortable relieving themselves on different surfaces (on and off the lead).
- Will not show any interest in ingesting their own or other dogs' faeces.

## Quick links

By following each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.



Why



Knowing your puppy



Managing for success



Teaching foundations



Being a partnership



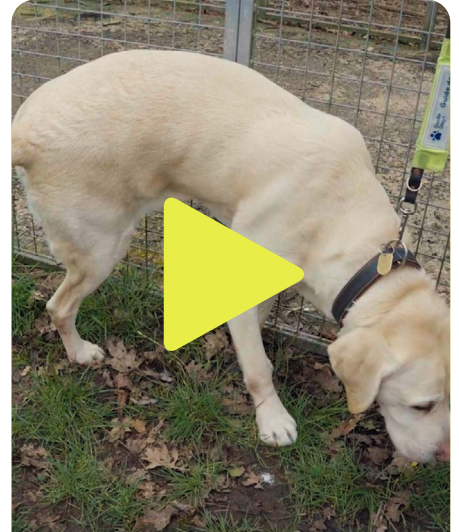
## Why

### Why is this important for a guide dog?

Knowing the routine of your puppy and toileting your puppy at home prior to going out where possible is the aim. By establishing a predictable and consistent toileting routine, this then helps with all parts of the guiding role.

The desire and need for a dog to toilet can affect their ability to concentrate. A dog that needs to toilet is more likely to make mistakes and not focus on guiding.

As well as having practical and welfare implications to a puppy, a puppy's relief routine can have implications on the matching process at the end of the training journey. If a puppy will only toilet on a certain type of surface, then it restricts the number of people the dog would be able to guide for. Some of our guide dog owners find it very difficult to locate and pick up after their dog on grass, as it's harder to differentiate as to what they are feeling. Hard surfaces can also be easier to clean and maintain.



[Video:](#) Guide dog owner relieving dog at home and work.



## Knowing your puppy

Your puppy's toileting routine will likely differ to other puppies and it's worth being aware that it will change over time with maturity and developmental changes. Being aware of some of the following factors that can affect toileting behaviour as these may help you be more prepared. These changes are perfectly normal.

- Age - young puppies toilet more frequently
- Illness
- Introduction of a new diet or new food rewards
- Stress and anxiety
- Exercise

- The weather, for example, a puppy not wanting to stand outside in the rain. Also in warmer months, if doors are open ensure you keep track of your puppy's movements so you can monitor and reward the toileting routine.
- Environmental factors such as scents, sounds and unfamiliar territory
- For bitches - coming into and during seasons

Every puppy is different and therefore you may notice that none of these factors have an effect but that other things do. The more relaxed we can be around our dogs, the more likely they are to be relaxed so stay calm and let us know if you have any questions.

Developing an overnight routine can be a little trickier for some puppies. The period between opportunities to toilet are longer and very young puppies can lack the physical ability to refrain from toileting overnight. At first, it may be necessary to provide opportunities for young puppies to toilet during the night while they are developing a routine. If your puppy wakes in the night indicating a need to relieve themselves, ensure that you interact with them as little as possible and once toileted, settle your puppy down again.



**Accidents will still happen. Don't worry about this, it's perfectly normal.**

### **Managing for success**

## **House training when puppy first enters the home**

Set your pup up for success by giving them as much opportunity as possible to relieve themselves in the toileting area provided. Accidents will still happen. Don't worry about this, it's perfectly normal.

- When your puppy has an accident in the house, don't move them, let them finish. It's crucial your puppy is comfortable toileting with people present. If your

puppy learns that when they relieve themselves they are moved, this makes this comfortable association much less likely. So let your puppy finish relieving and re-evaluate times between letting them outside.

- Let your puppy out to toilet a couple of times an hour, or after your puppy has woken up from a nap, has had a drink, eaten or had excessive exercise/play.
- The time you spend outside with your puppy should be no longer than 5 minutes at a time, the aim being to relax and focus on toileting but avoid this turning into a different activity such as play time in the garden.
- When you go out into the garden have the food already in your hand, on your person but not visible, e.g. in a pocket. This ensures your puppy will focus on toileting and not get distracted with the food on show.
- Always supervise your puppy when they're in the garden. That way, you'll know what they're doing, and that they won't be learning to enjoy inappropriate games such as digging or chewing plants.

#### **Possible signs that your puppy needs the toilet:**

- Extra/new interest in sniffing
- Any circling
- Slightly dipped posture
- Sudden loss of interest in an activity

#### **Always consider taking your puppy into the garden to toilet after they have:**

- Woken up
- Eaten
- Had a period of play
- Engaged in some training with you

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**Always supervise your puppy when they are in the garden.**



**Photo: Puppy about to wee.**

Puppies will have individual preferences as to which surface they prefer to toilet on. Use your first week to learn about their needs and routine. Understanding this in full however, will take much longer than the first week you are together.

When your puppy is very young, spend time close to the door that leads to the garden to help you get outdoors quickly. You can buy carpet protector and put this in the rooms where you spend the most time in case of accidents. You can also use baby gates and pens to restrict access to certain areas and rooms while you're still teaching your puppy where to toilet. Keep the door to your garden closed and encourage your puppy into the garden to toilet rather than allowing them to go in and out without you. Putting this on the door to the garden can help you keep a track of when your puppy last toileted. It will also allow you to see the progress you and your puppy are making.

[Download a copy of the First week toileting chart.](#)



**Photo: Toileting chart.**



**Photo: Outside toileting area.**



## Teaching foundations

### Toileting on cue

Puppy welfare should always come first: your puppy should be relaxed and uninhibited when toileting outside on a suitable surface. Only once this is ensured should you try to teach putting the behaviour onto a cue.

#### Stage 1: Beginning an association

Our aim is to link the words “busy-busy” to the action of toileting. Before starting to introduce the cue, you should be able to recognise the signs that your puppy is about to relieve, e.g. circling, sniffing, lowering of body position.

- Wait for opportunities when your puppy is naturally relieving themselves. When this happens, simply say “busy-busy” once they begin to toilet to start to build an association between the cue with the action of toileting.
- Use a soft, encouraging tone and give praise or a food reward when your puppy has finished, ensuring the whole experience is a positive one.
- This should continue for approximately two to three weeks, every time your puppy toilets under supervision. Avoid repeating the phrase “busy-busy”, only ask once.
- The more it happens, and your puppy is rewarded, the faster your puppy will learn.
- As the weeks progress aim to say “busy-busy” as your puppy begins to toilet.

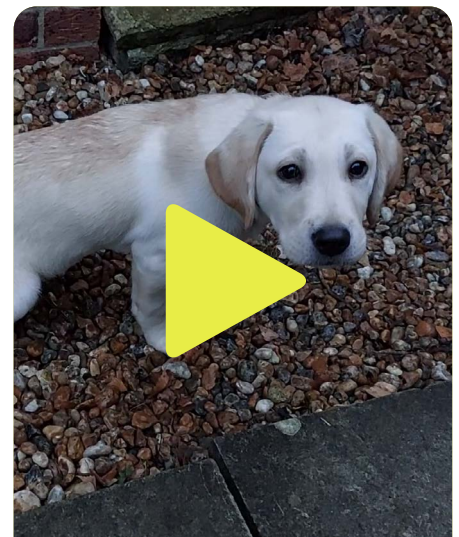
## Stage 2: Developing cue timing

Our aim is to slightly alter the timing of the “busy-busy” cue to coincide with the period just before your puppy toilets.

- When confident that your puppy is going to relieve themselves, gently prompt the relief by saying “busy-busy”, as before. Using their understanding gained from stage 1, your puppy should hopefully urinate or defecate straight away.
- Give them a food reward or praise as soon as they’ve finished, remember not to have the food in your hand visible to your puppy and to only cue them once.
- When you are confident you are getting this correct move on to next stage. This can take several weeks.



**Remember all puppies will develop and learn new skills in their own time.**



**Video: Starting “busy-busy” association.**

### Stage 3: Developing a response

The aim is for your puppy to initiate toileting behaviour in response to a cue on different surfaces and on/off lead.

- The next stage is saying the “busy-busy” cue, your puppy toilets and you reward. Where possible, your aim should be to ensure a response, such as after meals or first thing in the morning.
- Once you’re consistently able to say the cue just before your puppy starts to show the signs of needing to toilet, you can assume that your puppy has a good association between the cue and relieving themselves.

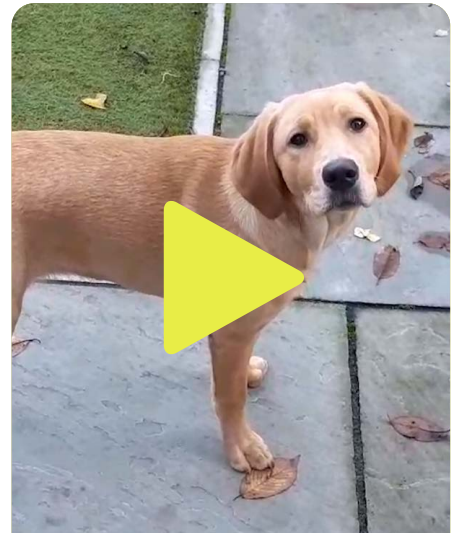
### Stage 4: Leash relieving (toileting on lead)

- Ensure your puppy is comfortable having the lead fitted in everyday scenarios.
- Set your puppy up for success. Initially chose an area (in the garden) where your puppy is comfortable toileting. Also choose a time when you know your puppy is due to toilet.
- Lengthen the lead, keeping the lead loose with limited tension on the puppy’s collar.
- Encourage your puppy to walk in circles around you.
- Cue “busy-busy” and reward your puppy for toileting.
- Practising leash relieving at home occasionally, is a good habit to get into. This skill will greatly assist the ability to match your dog with a guide dog owner.

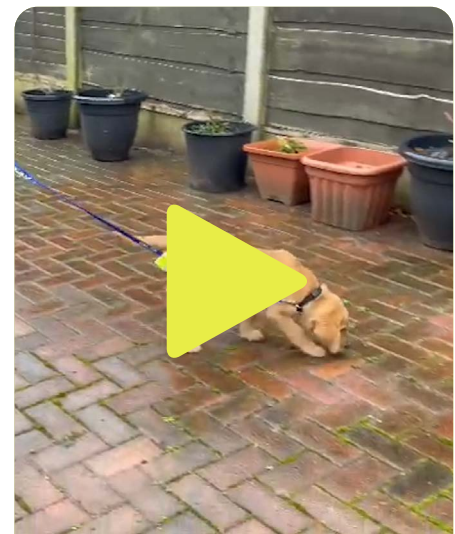
### Stage 5: Progression

The aim is to progress with your puppy responding to “busy-busy” cue in different situations and locations.

- Different areas: Ask your puppy to toilet by giving the cue when out and about. Make sure the area you select is likely to encourage toileting, is safe and free from obvious distractions. Ensure your lead is set to long lead length, to give your puppy the room to turn around.
- Different surfaces: Progress this to your puppy toileting on hard surfaces when cued. See leash relief guidance above.



[Video: Developing “busy-busy” cue association.](#)



[Video: Leash relief.](#)



## Being a partnership

- Remember all puppies will develop and learn new skills in their own time. No two puppies are the same, so it's important not to get too focused on exact timings. Instead, use the stages described as a general guide as to whether your puppy is on track. Once you've developed a routine you can start to increase the length of time between toileting opportunities. This is a gradual process that will continue to develop and be consolidated throughout the puppy raising period.
- Remember to continue to reward your puppy for positive responses and try, as with all cues, to avoid unnecessary repetition. Toileting routines take time to establish. Try not to pressurise yourself or your puppy, this will have the opposite effect than you want it to.
- If you have any concerns about your puppy's toileting routine, please get in touch with us. There are many different training methods that can be used for puppies as required.



**Toileting routines take time to establish and may change over time.**