Learning to potty train your new dog or puppy requires patience, commitment and consistency. Your new dog most likely will have accidents when you bring it home. One thing to remember is that every dog is different in how quickly they can be potty trained. It is important to establish a routine. The schedule teaches them when they are fed, when to play and when to go do their business outside. Puppies have tiny bladders and can’t control their bladder as easily as an adult dog. A good guide is that dogs can control their bladder one hour for every month of age. So if your puppy is 4 months old, don’t let it going longer than 4 hours to relieve himself. The following are things to consider when housebreaking a puppy…

1. Bring your puppy outside frequently, especially when you first bring him home. You should let them out at least every 2 hours. Also, first thing in the morning; after playing indoors; after eating; after drinking; after a nap; after being overly excited; right before going to bed
2. When you take the puppy outside it is best to keep him leashed, even in a fenced in area so you can bring him to the same spot each time. When he starts to go to the bathroom, use a specific word or phrase that you can eventually use to remind them what to do. i.e. “Go Potty”
3. Reward or praise your puppy every time they eliminate outdoors. Only do this immediately after they have finished. Praising the puppy is SO important. Your neighbors may wonder why you are throwing a party for your puppy after he has eliminated outside, but that’s ok!
4. Make sure your puppy is on a regular feeding schedule. Depending on the age of the puppy, they should be fed 2-3 times a day.
5. About 2 hours before bedtime, it would be best to pick up the water to reduce the likelihood that they will need to pee during the middle of the night. If your puppy whines during the night because he needs to go to the bathroom, don’t engage too much with him. Quietly take him outside and return to bed.
6. Utilizing a crate correctly is a great tool to potty train. It is important to teach your dog to love his crate. Dogs usually don’t like to be in their own mess. The crate shouldn’t be too big. If it is, the dog may use one corner of the crate to go to the bathroom and then settle away from it. Some wire crates have partitions so you can adjust the size of the crate when the puppy gets larger. The dog should be able to stand up, lie down and easily turn around.

You need to watch and carefully supervise your puppy inside. Look to see if the puppy starts to sniff the ground, whine, scratches at the door, squats, circles and is restless. This can be a sign he needs to relieve himself. Grab the leash and bring him out immediately.

If you catch your puppy in the act starting to have an accident, interrupt you puppy by saying “OUTSIDE” and immediately take them to their bathroom spot. Praise your puppy after they finish.

Don’t ever punish your puppy for eliminating in the house after the fact and never rub their nose in or near the mess. Dogs don’t make a mess out of spite. You will only cause your dog to fear you and go to the bathroom when you are out of sight. If there is an accident, don’t make a fuss about it. Just clean it up thoroughly. If you can’t supervise your dog inside, keep him in a confined area or have him tethered to you.

If you have to be away from your home more than 4 to 5 hours a day, this may not be the best time to get a puppy. Instead, consider a dog that is older that can hold it longer. If you already have a puppy and are gone for long periods, arrange for someone that you trust to take them on bathroom breaks.

There probably will be setbacks. As long as you continue a management program that includes taking your puppy out at the first sign they need to go and offering them praise or rewards, they’ll learn.

Happy training!