

House Training



Having a new dog can be an exciting and sometimes challenging experience. As a new dog owner, it is important to realize your role and how your behavior shapes the behavior of your growing dog. Your influence over your dog begins the moment you make first contact and then bring him/her home. Whether or not you are enrolled in formal training, you are still directing behavior and establishing patterns in your dog's life. By not teaching or setting limits that your dog understands, you may contribute to future behavior patterns and problems. This is especially true when it comes to teaching your dog proper house training habits.

Based on your effort, consistency, and guidance, your dog will quickly learn that there is no other place to relieve himself/herself other than outdoors. Some dogs, with 100% consistency on the owner's part, can grasp house training in as little as seven to twenty-one days. Some dogs may take up to six months or more to train if consistency is not in place and other factors are involved.

What allows your house training efforts to be successful? House training will not be successful without supervision, consistency, and guidance on the part of human members of the household.

The critical parts of house training can best be described using a four-legged chair analogy. The four legs of the chair represent the four parts that support a successful house training effort. For a chair to stand, all four legs must be solid and equal. If one leg is missing, out of place, or shorter than the others, the chair is unstable and will fall over.

The four parts—the legs—of house training are:

1. Crate Training and Supervision
2. Establish a Regular Schedule
3. Feedback and Discipline
4. Accident Cleanup

Each part plays an extremely important role in keeping dog owners and their dogs on track. Neglecting or shortcutting just one of these parts could have serious implications.

The plan described in this handout teaches owners to understand their dog's house training needs, curb problems before they start, and establish proper patterns that can last a lifetime.

Your Dog's Health and Medication

Before diving into the four parts of house training, it is important to assess your dog's overall health. Your dog's health can greatly impact the success of your house training efforts. Parasites, infections, viruses, gastrointestinal upset, allergies—to food or environment—and other health issues, can impact your dog's elimination process and schedule.

Medications that your dog may be taking can also impact house training. Some medications have side-effects such as increased thirst, frequent urination, loose stool, and constipation, to name a few. Consult with your veterinarian to determine if your dog's medication(s) could possibly be affecting your dog's water intake, appetite, and digestive process.

If you have questions or concerns, consult your veterinarian to verify that your dog is healthy before and during your house training efforts.

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Crate Training and Supervision

Using a dog crate is the optimum way to prevent your dog from misbehaving, injuring himself/herself, and having accidents. A dog crate is a dog-specific cage made of wire or molded plastic; some are welded aluminum. Use it to confine your dog for safety, security, house training, protecting household items, travel, and illness when you are unable to supervise him/her.

Some dog owners think that confining their best friend to a crate is cruel and inhumane. Some people think using a crate will cause resentment or psychological damage. Both thoughts are inaccurate. If introduced properly, your dog will consider the crate a room of his/her very own.

Using a crate for a dog is much like using a crib or playpen for small children. The crate is a safe place for your dog to rest when other parts of your life require your attention. Crates help dogs satisfy the den instinct inherited from their ancestors. Canines naturally and instinctively prefer to rest in sheltered areas. For example, you will often see dogs resting behind or under furniture.

Never use the crate to punish your dog. Many owners have attempted to use their dog's crate for a "doggy time out" or a "go to your room" type of punishment. Your dog has misbehaved so the owner puts their dog in the crate to "think about what they have done" or as a means of solitary confinement. Since dogs learn by forming positive and negative associations with humans, animals, objects, and events, this practice typically forms a negative association with the crate.

You should purchase a crate large enough for your dog to stretch out on its side and to sit or stand erect when fully grown. If you have a dog, it is more economical to buy a wire crate that will accommodate him/her as an adult, and then partition it to the right size. Many wire crates come with a metal divider/partition that can be adjusted as a dog grows or can be removed when your dog is full grown. If your crate does not have a partition, a movable wire or pegboard partition can be made or purchased. Most wire crates include a removable metal or plastic floor pan/tray. Wire crates require assembly and can be taken apart to allow you to move or travel with them. There are also models that fold down in one piece with handles for easier transportation from one location to another. Plastic crates, often called airline carriers or van-kennels, can also be used. These crates do not provide as much air circulation and some dogs can chew the plastic. A new crate may cost \$40.00 to \$250.00, depending on size and construction. This is well worth the investment in comparison to the cost of replacing household items or injury to your dog.

If your crate—or the area provided in the crate—is too large, it can undermine your house training efforts. Your dog may eliminate at one end of the crate and lie down at the other. Dogs are usually very clean about their "den" areas and will be more likely to hold their urination and bowel movements if they have limited space. Use your partition/divider to section off the crate to allow your dog only enough room to turn around and lie down.

Place your dog's crate in an area where it is convenient to get him/her from the crate to the outside potty area. Many owners choose an area in which the family spends a lot of time (kitchen or family room). Your dog's crate can also be placed in your bedroom at night.

It is not uncommon for a dog to whine or bark when first placed in a crate. This discomfort is not caused by the crate itself but by the adjustment to being left alone. Before being placed in a new home, dogs are used to constant interaction with mom, the litter, and the breeder. Being left alone is a new experience for them. Do not reward barking or whining by releasing your dog from the crate or with attention. If you are sure he/she doesn't need to eliminate, try ignoring him/her until he/she is quiet. You can then praise him/her or take him/her out of the crate. If ignoring your dog is not successful,

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you may try utilizing a spray bottle to curb the whining or barking. Fill a spray bottle with tap water and place the nozzle to stream like a squirt gun. Each time your dog begins to whine or bark, squirt them with the water until they stop. Your dog should not see what direction the spray is coming from. Your dog should be under the impression the house is doing the squirting as a result of the vocalizing. If they realize that their protesting causes you to give in, you will have difficulty with house training along with many sleepless nights. Dogs are creatures of habit and they will eventually acclimate themselves to the routine of crate training. With consistency your dog will show improvement.

Feeding your dog in his/her crate may assist your dog in making a positive association with it. You should not (1) leave meals in the crate for longer than 15 to 20 minutes or (2) feed your dog immediately prior to confinement for a long period of time. Water should not be left in the crate with a puppy since most dogs will spill the water. Further, dogs will develop a habit of drinking water as an activity and this will impact your urination schedule. More about a feeding and water schedule later.

During the house training process you should remove all bedding or soft items from your dog's crate. Dogs will often eliminate on soft or absorbent materials and push them aside in an effort to stay clean. This can compromise your house training efforts. Once your dog has made progress with house training you may consider introducing bedding for short periods at a later date. Consult with your trainer if you have questions about whether or not the time is right to introduce bedding in your dog's crate.

When placing your dog in a crate, make sure that the crate is erected properly and all latches are secured. You should not leave any type of collar or leash on your dog while in a crate. Collars can get snagged on crates and this may injure or accidentally choke a dog. Examine the area around where you placed the crate and remove any potentially dangerous items from your dog's reach. You may leave a safe chew toy in the crate for your dog. Make sure to monitor your dog when you introduce the toy out of the crate initially to make sure it is safe.

Children should be taught that your dog's crate is a special place for your dog. Children and adults should not pester your dog when it is in the crate. Children should not play in your dog's crate.

If you have multiple dogs, each dog should have their own individual crate. This is especially important when you are raising two dogs at the same time. Having separate crates will not only assist you in your house training efforts but help to prevent separation anxiety and other behavior problems.

When your dog is out of its crate, a responsible person must supervise him/her 100% of the time. Most dogs have a strong instinct to keep the area where they sleep clean. When dogs need to relieve themselves, they instinctively seek out an area away from where they sleep. It only takes a few seconds for an accident to happen. By supervising your dog you will be able to provide immediate feedback when your dog attempts to relieve itself indoors. If you are unable to supervise your dog the best place for your dog to be is in the crate.

Before bedtime it is important to give your dog one more opportunity to relieve himself/herself—more about this later. When it is time for bed, your dog should be placed in his/her secure crate. Do not give in to him/her if he/she cries or whines.

Review: Crate Training and Supervision

1. During the house training process, your dog should be supervised in the yard and house.
2. The best way to prevent your dog from misbehaving, injuring itself, and having house training accidents, is use a dog crate.

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3. If you cannot supervise your dog (away from home, sleeping, or unable to keep an eye on him/her,) it should be confined to its crate.
4. Your dog's crate should not be used for punishment or a canine time out.
5. Limit the amount of space your dog has in the crate during the house training process. Your dog should be able to lie on its side comfortably.
6. During the house training process you should remove all bedding or soft items from your dog's crate.
7. You should not leave any type of collar on your dog while in a crate.
8. Children and adults should not pester your dog when it is in the crate.
9. If you have multiple dogs, each dog should have their own individual crate.
10. When your dog is out of its crate, a responsible person must supervise him/her 100% of the time.
11. Without a crate or 24-hour-a-day direct supervision, your dog will choose his/her potty areas.
12. At night or when away, secure your dog in his/her crate.
13. You can begin to give your dog more freedom in the house and yard only after he/she is reliably house trained.

Establish a Regular Schedule

House training your dog will be more likely to succeed when you implement a regular schedule. A consistent schedule teaches your dog that there are times to eat, drink, play, and eliminate. By regulating your dog's food and water intake, you will be able to determine the approximate times your dog will need to relieve himself/herself. If the feeding and water times are consistent you will find that your dog will eliminate at approximately the same times each day.

Your Dog's Diet

There may be many options regarding today's dog foods to meet your dog's nutritional needs. Unfortunately there is no one particular dog food that is best suited for every dog. There is also no guarantee that the food you have chosen, however highly regarded, will suit your dog's individual nutritional needs.

Keep in mind that your dog's food will affect the frequency and consistency of your dog's daily bowel movements. You should consult with your veterinarian if your dog has frequent bowel movements or persistently loose stool. This could be a result of an allergic reaction to your dog's food. Your veterinarian may recommend that your dog be placed on a different or restrictive diet.

Some foods that are designed for adult dogs are not best suited for puppies and vice versa. Dog and puppy foods have different ingredients and nutritional content. Finding the best food for your individual dog may involve some patience and experimentation. If you have any questions about the different options of food to feed your dog consult with your veterinarian for guidance.

Feeding should be done on a fixed schedule using dog food that is designed for your dog. Most dogs older than four months are usually fed twice daily, with the exception of large breeds, dogs with health problems, or diet restrictions. Some dogs may be fed more frequently, three or four times a day, before transitioning to twice daily.

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At scheduled feeding times your dog's food should not be left down for longer than 15 to 20 minutes. This gives your dog ample opportunity to consume what is provided. If your dog has not consumed its food after 15 to 20 minutes, remove the food and wait for the next scheduled feeding. Healthy dogs will not starve themselves. Your dog may pass up or nibble at a few feedings, but they will eventually learn to eat at the scheduled feedings. If you notice behavior and health changes in addition to appetite problems and you are concerned about a potential health issue affecting your dog's appetite, you should consult with your veterinarian immediately.

Do not leave your dog's food down throughout the day (a.k.a., free feeding). By leaving the food down for long periods, your dog will have the opportunity to pick at the food throughout the day, which can create a finicky eater or consume the entire amount at different times on different days. This will impact the timing and regularity of your dog's bowel movements which will greatly impact your house training efforts.

Most dogs will need to relieve themselves soon after a meal. The amount of time after a meal and the need to relieve itself may vary by dog. On average most dogs will need to go out within 5 to 30 minutes after eating and drinking water. As the house training process progresses you will start to get a better idea of the amount of time for your individual dog.

People Food

Do not feed your dog people food or table scraps unless specifically instructed by your veterinarian. In some situations your veterinarian may recommend people food for dietary or health reasons. Some foods which are edible for humans, and even other animals, can be potential hazards for dogs. Some of these foods may cause only mild digestive upsets, whereas, others can cause severe illness and possibly death. A diet consisting mainly of people food will also impact your dog's nutritional needs and overall health. Feeding your dog people food also increases the potential of creating a dog that begs for food and other bad habits.

Treats

You may provide your dog with dog specific treats on occasion throughout the day. This is contingent that they are consuming their regular meals. Giving treats too frequently throughout the day will have an impact on your dog consuming his/her regular food at meal times. Some dogs will fill up on treats or develop a habit of holding out for treats and will not consume their meals. Dogs that are satisfying their appetite with treats are also potentially impacting their nutritional needs.

Water Intake

Your dog should be offered water on a schedule during the house training process. Dogs should not have free access to water throughout the day. Dogs will often drink water as an activity and this leads to a full bladder that will need to be emptied. Offer your dog water with its meals, during the middle of the day, in the evening at least two hours before the last potty break of the day. The key is not to limit the amount of water your dog gets, but to limit the times it is available. Try not to give your dog any water within two hours of the last potty break before bedtime. If your dog has a health condition, has been extremely active, or is exposed to extreme temperature you may increase the opportunities for water throughout the day.

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Sample Time Schedule

You can use this sample schedule as a starting point and adjust it to suit your requirements.

TIME	FEEDING	WATER	POTTY
0700			X
0715	X	X	
0730			X
1200	X*	X	
1215			X
1600			X
1615	X	X	
1630			X
2000		X	
2200			X
2205	Bedtime: Crate		

*Some veterinarians and breeders may recommend feeding some dogs 3 or 4 times a day. This may be due to a health reason or your dog's size or breed. For most dogs this extra meal will eventually be eliminated. If your dog begins to ignore or only pick at a meal, it may be time to eliminate the midday meal. If you have questions on whether or not a midday meal is beneficial to your dog, consult with your veterinarian.

Dogs must go out first thing in the morning and the very last thing at night. Your dog should not have access to water for at least two hours before its pre-bedtime potty break. In between potty breaks your dog should be supervised by a responsible person 100% of the time or confined to its crate. Do not crate your dog longer than you know he/she can wait to eliminate. It is important to have a schedule on weekends or days off that resembles your normal daily schedule.

Some young dogs may benefit from a potty break during the middle of the night for the first week or more. This would require you to set your alarm clock to a time that is half-way between the last potty break of the previous day and the first potty break of the next day. This potty break should not be initiated by your dog and water should not be given at this time. This middle of the night potty break should focus exclusively on the task at hand and be all business. As the days go by, you can start to gradually move this middle of the night potty break closer to the next day morning potty break. This can be done gradually in 15 to 20 minute increments until you are close to the next day's morning potty break and the middle of the night potty break has been eliminated.

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As you proceed with house training, stretch the day's potty trips further apart each week by fifteen-minute intervals. The eventual goal is to have a healthy dog that is housetrained to go out a minimum of three to four times a day to potty.

Going Outside

To teach your dog where to potty, you should go outside with him/her each time. Put your dog on a leash (five to six feet in length) and a secure collar each time. By having your dog on a leash you will be better able to supervise him/her and provide much needed feedback. Utilizing a dog door or leaving your dog unattended in the yard will make your house training process much more difficult. It is also important for dogs to learn how to relieve themselves on a leash and in your presence. The leash and collar will allow you to prevent other types of misbehavior from developing such as eating things off of the ground or digging.

When you take your dog out you should take him/her to a designated potty area in the yard or near your home. The scent of previous eliminations in this area will stimulate your dog to use this area again. This will further advance the goal of having your dog eliminate outdoors. When outside avoid walking the entire yard or neighborhood. This will only allow your dog to get distracted, missing the meaning of your trip outdoors in the first place. Stand still in the area and allow your dog to move around you.

You must also stay with your dog when you are at the designated potty area. This will allow you to observe your dog's body language leading up to elimination. This will help you prepare for catching attempts to go indoors.

From day one start to associate a specific potty command or phrase when you reach the designated area. Use a phrase such as "potty" or "hurry up." This phrase will become the signal to let your dog know that it is time to focus and get down to the task at hand. This will also become a command that you will be able to use for your dog's lifetime. It is extremely helpful to have a dog that eliminates on command.

It is important to note that the action of elimination is rewarding for your dog. By relieving itself your dog will become more comfortable and this is a reward in itself. AFTER your dog has finished going, softly praise him/her. Your verbal praise is crucial in helping your dog understand it is correct to potty outside. Before praising him/her, be sure he/she is finished eliminating. Dogs are easily distracted; praising him/her too soon may stop him/her from finishing what he/she started. Your feedback after your dog goes is crucial to success.

Some may recommend providing your dog with a treat or other type of food reward after he/she has completed going outdoors. This can potentially present problems and is not recommended. By using treats to reward your dog when it relieves itself, you are possibly giving your dog too many treats since dogs relieve themselves multiple times on a daily basis. The increased consumption of treats will have an impact on your dog's overall digestive process and frequency of bowel movements. This will result in a need for more trips outside. The old adage of what goes in must come out applies. Your dog may also begin to associate returning indoors or focusing on you while outdoors in anticipation of receiving a treat. Some dogs may become consumed with the anticipation of treats instead of focusing on the task of relieving themselves outside. The reward of relieving himself/herself along with your verbal and physical praise should be plenty of incentive.

If your dog happens to lie down or become distracted while outside, encourage him/her to refocus and re-issue your potty command. Getting your dog on its feet and moving can also help to stimulate your dog to relieve itself.

The amount of time spent outdoors at each potty break should be consistent. Allow your dog an average of five minutes to complete the task at hand. Giving your dog 30 seconds on one trip and 30 minutes on another will be confusing and

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cause problems with the house training process. If during the allotted outside time frame your dog does not relieve himself/herself, return indoors. It is important to closely supervise or confine your dog after an unsuccessful potty break. This may provide you with a valuable opportunity to discipline your dog if he/she attempts to go indoors. It is important to catch them in the act to effectively correct them. You may also need to confine your dog to its crate if you are unable to supervise them after an unsuccessful outside trip.

While outdoors it is important to note that some dogs may need to relieve themselves in multiple attempts. Just because your dog has urinated once or had a single bowel movement they may not be completely done. Avoid rushing indoors after the initial elimination and give your dog a few more minutes to completely finish if needed. After he/she relieves himself/herself you can also take him/her out for a longer walk or some playtime. Playtime and walks should only begin after he/she has eliminated.

Anytime your dog relieves himself/herself outside, you can provide him/her with supervised time to move around the house. As your house training progresses, you can allow your dog a little more freedom between potty exercises.

Review: Establishing a Regular Schedule

1. A consistent schedule teaches your dog that there are times to eat, drink, play, and go potty.
2. By regulating your dog 's food and water intake, you will be able to determine the approximate times your dog will need to relieve himself/herself
3. Dogs must go out first thing in the morning and the very last thing at night.
4. Your dog should not have access to water for at least two hours before the pre-bedtime potty break.
5. In between potty breaks your dog should be supervised 100% of the time by a responsible person or confined to its crate.
6. Do not crate your dog longer than you know he/she can wait to eliminate.
7. As you proceed with house training, stretch the day's potty trips further apart each week by fifteen-minute intervals.
8. To teach your dog where to potty, you should go outside with him/her each time.
9. Put your dog on a leash (five to six feet in length) and a secure collar when outside.
10. When you take your dog out you should take him/her to a designated potty area in the yard or near your home.
11. Stand still in the potty area and allow your dog to move around you.
12. Associate a specific potty command or phrase when you reach the designated area.
13. Once your dog has finished going, softly praise him/her.
14. The amount of time spent outdoors at each potty break should be consistent.
15. Anytime your dog relieves himself/herself outside, you can provide him/her with time out of the crate when you return in the house.

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Feedback and Discipline

A house trained dog should not relieve itself indoors. The only exceptions would be a dog that is ill or has not been let outside according to schedule and can no longer physically hold it. Some dogs that have never attempted or had an accident indoors are not fully house trained. For a dog to fully grasp the concept of house training, it must make an attempt to relieve itself in the house, then be caught in the act, and effectively corrected as a result. Don't assume your dog is completely house trained before this happens.

If you do not catch your dog in the act of relieving himself/herself indoors, do NOT correct him/her for it! Any discipline after the fact will only confuse your dog and potentially cause your dog to fear you. Every accident not caught in the act is an opportunity for your dog to learn that your home is its potty area. If you find a mess that was left when you were not there, clean it up and chalk it up as a learning experience. A missed accident only emphasizes the importance of constant supervision and the use of a crate.

If your dog does attempt to relieve itself in the house, you will need to respond immediately, to catch him/her in the act. This will be easier if you have taken note of your dog's body language before it relieves itself outside. Signs may include circling, pacing, whining, sniffing, crouching or leaving the room.

Corrections should be immediate and to the point, but do NOT scold your dog—scolding will make your dog afraid to potty when you are present! Some dogs will respond to a startling “NO!” spoken one time. Often times two or three streams of plain water sprayed from a bottle will startle your dog and put a stop to it relieving itself. Another way to interrupt your dog is with a noise producing device such as a shaker can. A shaker can is an empty soda can that has a few small pebbles or pennies inside. Use a piece of tape to cover the opening once the pebbles or pennies are inside. When your dog attempts to go indoors, lob the shaker can in the vicinity of your dog to startle him/her. Make sure not to hit your dog directly with the shaker can. A spray bottle and a shaker-can can also be useful for a dog thinking that the house is correcting him/her. The spray bottle is often preferred when there are other dogs in the household. Always take him/her out to the potty area to complete or finish what he/she attempted to do in the house. Use your potty command and then follow by lots of praise.

Keep a watchful eye on your dog when he/she is active or after exercise. Activity will increase the likelihood that your dog will need to relieve himself/herself. This may be the opportunity you need to catch him/her in the act so you can effectively discipline him/her.

Discipline After The Fact

Some owners still practice disciplining their dog after the fact. An owner has left their dog unsupervised and then discovers that their dog has peed on the floor in the house. The owner then reacts to the accident on the floor by rubbing their dog's nose in the urine and/or scolding him/her. The owner then believes that their dog “knows he/she has done wrong” and therefore the correction was effective. The owner believes their dog feels a sense of guilt for going on the floor and this will curb the future accidents. Instead of correcting their dog the owner is teaching their dog to act apprehensive as a result of scolding or nose rubbing. This action may also be interpreted as random erratic human behavior in your dog's mind. Your dog may begin to experience the same apprehension or what the owner interprets as guilt when an accident is on the floor. The accident on floor produces conditioned response to the impending response by the owner. Your dog is not capable of understanding or associating the human's late response with the action of peeing on the floor one minute or several hours ago.

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The best way to apply an effective correction is to catch your dog in the act or when it is preparing to relieve itself indoors. Your dog must associate the correction with the action. If the correction comes after the action, your dog will be confused. Corrections well after the fact will result in apprehension and fear directed towards you and others.

Hitting or Spanking

Hitting or spanking your dog with your hand, newspaper, or other item is not an effective means to correct undesired behaviors. Hitting your dog will result in your dog fearing you and possibly others. This form of intimidation could also make your dog hand shy or defensively aggressive around people.

Review: Feedback and Discipline

1. For a dog to fully grasp the concept of house training, it must make an attempt to relieve itself in the house, then be caught in the act, and effectively corrected as a result.
2. If you do not catch your dog in the act of relieving himself/herself indoors, then do not correct him/her for it.
3. If your dog does attempt to relieve itself in the house, you must respond immediately, to catch him/her in the act. Do NOT scold your dog—scolding will make your dog afraid to potty when you are present!
4. The best way to apply an effective correction is to catch your dog in the act or when it is preparing to relieve itself indoors.
5. Always take your dog out to the potty area to complete or finish what he/she attempted to do in the house.
6. Corrections after the fact will result in apprehension and fear directed towards you and others.

Accident Cleanup

Effectively cleaning up your dog's potty accident is the vital fourth part of the plan. Every trace of the accident must be removed—right down to the floor under your carpet—because your dog will think it is one of his/her potty spots. Lucky for us, science has developed the products to make the task nearly fool-proof: Simple Solutions or Nature's Miracle

Steps

1. Remove as much of the stain or odor as possible off the floor or furniture. Blot up liquid with a paper towel; thoroughly dispose of solid matter like feces, mud, or vomit.
2. Pour the Simple Solutions or Nature's Miracle directly onto the area at full strength.
3. For carpet, use enough to completely saturate the area and soak through to the padding and subfloor. Use a bristle brush to rub the Simple Solutions or Nature's Miracle into the soiled area.
4. Let the carpet dry naturally. Do not use fans or heat to speed drying. Repeat as required until the stain and odor are completely eliminated.
5. For hard floors like hardwood, linoleum and cement, blot or pick up as much of the mess as possible, and then spray the area with Simple Solutions or Nature's Miracle. Let the product sit for 20 to 30 minutes, and then blot it up.