

BONUS GUIDE

Potty Rescue

Troubleshooting Accidents, Apartment Life and Setbacks



A companion to **Is This Normal? The Puppy Blues Survival Plan**

NIBBLE & NAP

INTRODUCTION

Puddles Are Information

You've done the trips, bought the enzyme cleaner and said "go potty" so many times it's in your dreams. And there's still a puddle by the couch. Take a breath: you're not failing, and your puppy isn't being spiteful.

Every accident tells you something. It tells you when your puppy needed to go, where they felt it was okay, and what you missed in the minutes before. Once you learn to read that information, accidents stop feeling random and start feeling fixable.

● How this guide works

Chapter 4 of the Survival Plan gave you the basics: the five moments to go out, the perfect potty trip, supervision and clean-up. This guide picks up where that chapter stops, for the days when the basics aren't enough.

You don't need to read it in order. If you have one burning problem, jump straight to Chapter 4 and find your situation.

● One promise

Everything here is calm and reward-based. No scolding, no nose-rubbing, no "showing them who's boss". Those methods tend to teach puppies to hide when they need to go, and hiding is the opposite of what you want.

CHAPTER 1

Read Your Puppy

Most accidents don't come out of nowhere. There's almost always a small signal, a clear moment, or a pattern you can spot once you know where to look. This chapter turns you into a puppy detective.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy gives very small or very fast signals, or none you can see yet. Young puppies often feel the urge and go within seconds. Signals usually get clearer and earlier as your puppy grows. If your puppy suddenly needs to go much more often than before, or seems uncomfortable when peeing, check with your vet.

• The signals to watch for

Some are obvious. Some are easy to miss when you're making coffee.

- **Sniffing the floor** with nose down and a sudden, focused look.
- **Circling** or turning in small loops, especially before a poop.
- **Walking away** from play or from you, toward a corner, a rug or the door.
- **Stopping mid-play** and going still for a second.
- **Whining, pacing or staring** at you or at the door.
- **Heading for a past accident spot.**

When you see any of these, don't wait to be sure. Pick your puppy up or clip the leash and go. A false alarm costs you two minutes. A missed signal costs you a carpet.

● Timing: the hidden schedule

Your puppy's body runs on a fairly predictable clock. Most puppies need to go:

- **Within minutes of waking up**, even from a short nap.
- **Some time after eating**, often within half an hour, but every puppy is different.
- **During exciting moments**: play, zoomies, guests arriving, a new toy.
- **After drinking a lot**, especially after play or on warm days.

Your puppy's personal timing is what matters, and the only way to learn it is to write it down.

● Bladder basics (the simple version)

A young puppy's bladder is small and the "hold it" control is still developing. That's why a puppy can go out, pee, come back in and seem to "need to go again" soon after. It's not stubbornness. It's a body that's still growing.

Control usually improves gradually over the first months, a little more each week. Activity, excitement, cold, and drinking a lot all shorten the time your puppy can wait. For anything about how much your puppy should drink or eat, follow your vet's advice.

● The potty log

For one to two weeks, write down every pee, poop and accident. A note on your phone or a sheet on the fridge works fine. It feels tedious, but it's the fastest way to find your puppy's pattern.

Time	Pee / poop	Where	What happened before
7:02	Pee + poop	Outside	Woke up
7:40	Pee	Outside	15 min after breakfast
9:15	Pee (accident)	Living room rug	Played with kids
11:00	Pee	Outside	Woke from nap

After a few days, look for patterns:

- **Accidents at the same time each day?** Add a trip 10-15 minutes before that time.
- **Accidents after the same activity?** Add a trip in the middle of that activity.
- **Accidents in the same spot?** Block access and clean it with enzyme cleaner again.
- **Poops at similar times?** You've found your puppy's poop clock. Plan trips around it.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Waiting to "see if they really need to go".** By the time you're sure, it's too late.
- ✗ **Guessing instead of logging.** Memory is unreliable when you're tired.
- ✗ **Ignoring a sudden change.** A big shift in pee frequency is a vet question first.

✓ Your read-your-puppy checklist

- ☐ Signals listed and shared with the whole family
- ☐ Potty log started (phone note or fridge sheet)
- ☐ Log reviewed after three days for patterns
- ☐ Extra trips added before your puppy's "danger times"
- ☐ Leash and treats by the door for fast exits

CHAPTER 2

Building the Routine

A good potty routine is boring, predictable and repeated a hundred times. That's exactly why it works. This chapter gives you schedules by age, a cue that actually means something, and a plan for nights and the crate.



Is this normal?

Yes, if the schedule that worked last week suddenly needs adjusting. Puppies change fast, and the routine should change with them. If your puppy can't go more than a short time between pees even as they grow, or the gaps suddenly get shorter, talk to your vet.

● **Potty schedules by age**

These are starting points, not limits. Your log from Chapter 1 always beats a table. When your puppy is active, playing or excited, expect shorter gaps.

Age	Daytime trips	Nights	Notes
8-10 weeks	Every 1-2 hours, plus after every nap, meal and play	Usually 1-2 quick trips	Carry to the spot if accidents happen on the way
10-16 weeks	Every 2-3 hours, plus key moments	Often 0-1 trips	Start stretching gaps slowly if the log is clean
4-6 months	Every 3-4 hours, plus key moments	Many puppies sleep through	Keep key-moment trips even when gaps grow

Stretch the gaps by small steps, about 15-30 minutes at a time. If accidents come back, go back to the last gap that worked and stay there a few more days.

● A workday template (around 12 weeks)

If you work from home or have help, a weekday might look like this. Adjust times to your life.

Time	Potty moment	Then
7:00	Wake-up trip	Breakfast
7:30	After-meal trip	Play, then nap in crate
9:30	Wake-up trip	Short training game
12:00	Midday trip (you, a neighbor or a walker)	Lunch, then nap
14:30	Wake-up trip	Play, short outing
17:00	Trip	Nap
18:30	After-dinner trip	Calm family time
22:30	Last trip	Bed

Meal times and amounts depend on your puppy's food, age and size. Follow the food label and your vet.

● Teaching the cue word

Your cue ("go potty", "be quick", anything short) only works if it's linked to the act. Many people say it a hundred times before the puppy knows what it means.

- 1 Say the cue while your puppy is already going.** Quietly, once.
- 2 Reward the moment they finish.** Praise and a tiny treat, right there.
- 3 After a week or two,** start saying the cue just as your puppy starts sniffing and circling.
- 4 Later,** say it when you arrive at the spot. Most puppies start to "go on cue" over weeks of practice.

● Rewards that actually work

- **Pick a potty-only treat.** Something small and tasty your puppy doesn't get anywhere else.
- **Keep treats at the door,** in a jar or pouch, so you never go out empty-handed.
- **Reward outside, not back inside.** By the time you're in the kitchen, the moment is gone.

- **Add a life reward.** After going, your puppy gets a sniff walk, a game or a few minutes of exploring. Potty first, fun second.

● Nighttime and the crate's role

The crate helps potty training because most puppies try to keep their sleeping space clean. It only works if the crate is the right size and your puppy isn't left in it longer than they can hold it. The Survival Plan (Chapter 5) explains crate basics, and the bonus *Sleep Rescue* covers nights in depth.

For potty purposes, keep night trips simple:

- 1 **Last trip right before bed,** even if your puppy went an hour ago.
- 2 **Night wake-up:** leash, spot, cue, quiet praise, back to the crate. No play, no lights, no chatting.
- 3 **Morning:** carry or walk your puppy straight out. Don't stop to make coffee first.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Copying a schedule and ignoring your log.** Your puppy's pattern wins.
- ✗ **Stretching gaps too fast** after one good day.
- ✗ **Using the cue as a nag,** repeating it over and over while waiting.
- ✗ **Long crate stretches** beyond what your puppy can hold.

✓ Your routine checklist

- ☐ Schedule for your puppy's age written down
- ☐ Gaps stretched only by small steps
- ☐ Cue word said while your puppy is going
- ☐ Potty-only treats at the door
- ☐ Life reward after each outdoor success
- ☐ Quiet, boring night trips

CHAPTER 3

Apartment, High-Rise and Bad-Weather Life

Potty training in a house with a yard is one thing. Potty training on the 14th floor, in February, with an elevator that takes forever, is a whole different sport. This chapter is for everyone without a back door that opens onto grass.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your apartment puppy has more accidents in the hallway or elevator than at home, or won't go in the rain. Long trips to the outdoors and new surfaces make it harder for young puppies. With a clear plan, most apartment puppies learn just as well as yard puppies. If cold or wet weather seems to cause pain or limping, ask your vet.

● Pads, grass patches or outside only?

There's no single right answer. Choose based on your building, your schedule and your long-term goal.

Option	Good for	Watch out for
Pads	Very young puppies, long days, high floors	Puppy may learn that soft floor = toilet
Real or fake grass patch	Balconies, a step toward outdoor grass	Needs regular cleaning, can smell
Outside only	Low floors, people home often	Many trips, hard in bad weather
Mix (pad + outside)	Busy weeks, transition periods	Keep each spot fixed and consistent

Whatever you choose, keep the indoor spot in one fixed place. Treat it exactly like the outdoor spot: cue, wait, reward.

● The elevator problem

Long trips from door to grass are where many apartment accidents happen. Your puppy holds it just long enough to reach the hallway.

- **Carry young puppies** all the way to the spot. It's harder for most puppies to go while being carried.
- **Keep shoes, keys and leash ready** by the door so there's no delay.
- **Go straight to the spot.** No chatting with neighbors on the way out. Socialize on the way back.
- **Pick the closest patch of grass** or dirt and use it every time.

● Moving from pads to outside

Switch gradually. Over weeks, not days.

- 1 **Make sure outdoor trips are already happening** alongside the pad. Reward outdoor success extra well.
- 2 **Move the pad slowly toward the door**, a little every few days.
- 3 **Take a lightly used pad outside** and place it on your outdoor spot. The smell says "this is the place".
- 4 **Make the pad smaller** over time, then remove it outdoors once your puppy goes reliably there.
- 5 **Remove the indoor pad** once your puppy has had a run of accident-free days and can hold it between trips.
- 6 **Expect a wobble or two.** If accidents return, add more outdoor trips rather than bringing the pad back immediately.

● Rain, snow and cold

Some puppies would rather explode than get their paws wet. That's normal, and it's workable.

- **Go out with them**, every time. A puppy left alone at the door in the rain will just wait to come back in.

- **Find or create shelter:** a covered spot, an overhang, a corner by the building. In snow, clear a small patch down to the ground.
- **Practice in light rain first** before a big storm forces the issue.
- **Shorter, more frequent trips** in cold weather. Cold can make the need to go come faster.
- **Wipe paws after walks** on salted or treated sidewalks, and dry your puppy with a towel they know.
- **A coat or booties** can help some small or short-coated puppies. Introduce them indoors with treats first.
- **Hot days:** go out in cooler hours and check the pavement with the back of your hand. If it's too hot for your hand, it's too hot for paws.

● No yard, no problem

You don't need a yard. You need a reliable spot and a routine.

- **Choose one or two nearby spots** and stick with them.
- **On busy streets,** walk a few steps away from traffic noise to a calmer corner. Scared puppies often hold it.
- **For long workdays,** plan a dog walker, a neighbor, or a pad area in a puppy-proofed space (see Chapter 9 of the Survival Plan).

What to avoid

- ✗ **Pads all over the apartment.** One spot, one place.
- ✗ **Removing pads overnight** when you decide to switch. Go step by step.
- ✗ **Sending your puppy out alone** in bad weather and hoping.
- ✗ **Punishing a puppy who won't go in the rain.** Fear makes them hold it even longer.

 Your apartment checklist

- ☐ Indoor option chosen (pad, grass patch, or none)

- ☐ One fixed indoor spot and one or two outdoor spots

- ☐ Leash, keys, shoes and treats ready by the door

- ☐ Pad-to-outside plan started, step by step

- ☐ Bad-weather plan: shelter, towel, shorter trips

- ☐ Midday help arranged for long days

CHAPTER 4

Troubleshooting by Situation

This is the chapter to bookmark. Find your situation, try the fixes in order, and give each one at least a week before deciding it doesn't work. Always run a quick health check in your mind first: if anything seems physically off, Chapter 5 comes before this one.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy has one stubborn "problem" even while everything else is improving. Most puppies have a weak spot: a time of day, a place, a surface. If a problem appears suddenly in a puppy who was doing well, or comes with any change in pee, poop or energy, call your vet first.

● Quick troubleshooting table

If...	Try...
Pees right after coming in	Wait longer outside, be more boring, play after potty
Pees in the crate	Check crate size, shorten crate time, vet check
Marks the same spot	Enzyme clean, block access, reward outdoor sniffing
Pees when excited or greeting	Calm greetings, greet outside, no leaning over
Poops at night	Adjust last trip and evening routine, ask vet about meal timing
Regression after a move or vacation	Back to the 8-week routine for a while
Only goes on carpet or rugs	Roll up rugs, bring the texture outside, then fade it
Won't go on leash	Longer leash, quiet spot, stand still and look away

● "Pees right after coming in"

This is the most common complaint, and one of the most fixable. Usually your puppy got distracted outside, then relaxed the moment they got home.

- 1 Stay out longer.** Wait 3-5 minutes past what feels reasonable.

- 2 Be the most boring person alive.** No talking, no games, no phone calls. Stand still in the spot.
- 3 Play only after the pee.** If play comes first, your puppy learns that going ends the fun.
- 4 Wait for the second pee.** Many puppies go twice. Give it a couple more minutes after the first one.
- 5 Nothing happened?** Back inside, crate or close supervision, and try again in 10-15 minutes.

● "Pees in the crate"

Most puppies avoid soiling their bed, so this one deserves a closer look.

- **Crate too big?** If your puppy can pee at one end and sleep at the other, use a divider.
- **Too long in the crate?** Check your log. The gap may be longer than your puppy can hold.
- **Absorbent bedding?** A thick blanket can soak it up and hide it. Try a thinner, washable mat for a while.
- **Past history?** Puppies kept a long time in small pens may lose the "clean bed" instinct. Go slower and supervise more.
- **Sudden change?** If crate accidents start in a puppy who was dry, call your vet.

● "Marks the same spot again and again"

A spot that smells like pee says "toilet" to your puppy, even after you've cleaned it.

- 1 Clean again with an enzyme cleaner,** following the label. Soak the area, not just the surface.
- 2 Block access** for a few weeks: furniture, a gate, or a closed door.
- 3 Change the meaning of the spot.** Put the food bowl, a bed or a training mat there. Most puppies don't pee where they eat or rest.
- 4 Reward sniffing and peeing outside** generously.

Leg-lifting on furniture in older puppies can be marking. Ask your vet about spaying, neutering and marking for your puppy.

● "Pees when excited or when greeted"

Some puppies leak a little when they're thrilled or when someone leans over them. This isn't a house-training failure. It's an emotional reaction, and scolding makes it worse.

- **Keep greetings low-key.** Come home calmly and say hello after a minute or two.
- **Greet outside** or on an easy-to-clean floor.
- **Crouch sideways** instead of leaning over. Avoid reaching for the top of the head.
- **Toss a treat on the floor** when you walk in. It gives your puppy something to do besides worrying.

Many puppies grow out of this gradually as they gain confidence. If it's getting worse, or your puppy also seems fearful in many situations, talk to your vet and a qualified reward-based trainer.

● "Poops at night"

- **Look at the evening routine.** A good play and a last trip shortly before bed help.
- **Add a poop opportunity:** a slow, sniffy walk in the evening often gets things moving.
- **Ask your vet about meal timing** and amounts for your puppy. Don't change food on your own.
- **Night accident?** Clean quietly, no fuss, and log the time. If it happens at the same hour, set an alarm a little earlier for a while.
- **Soft stools or diarrhea** are a health issue, not a training issue. Call your vet.

● "Regression after a move or vacation"

New places, new smells and a broken routine often bring accidents back, even in a puppy who was doing great.

- 1 Treat the new place like day one.** Small zone, gates, more supervision.
- 2 Go back to more frequent trips** for a week or two, then stretch them again.
- 3 Show the new outdoor spot** right away and use it every time.
- 4 Rebuild the old rhythm:** same wake-up, meal and bed times as before.

The Survival Plan's reset plan (Chapter 14) works here too.

● "Only goes on carpet or rugs"

Some puppies form a strong preference for soft surfaces, often because pads or rugs were their first toilet.

- **Roll up rugs** and close off carpeted rooms for now.
- **Bring the texture outside:** a small piece of old rug or a pad on the outdoor spot.
- **Reward hugely** when your puppy goes on it outdoors, then shrink it until it's gone.
- **Supervise closely indoors**, especially near carpet edges and soft mats.

● "Won't go on leash"

Some puppies feel watched or restricted on a leash, or they only went in a fenced area before.

- 1 **Use a longer leash** or a long line so your puppy can move away a little.
- 2 **Choose a quiet, familiar spot** away from traffic and people.
- 3 **Stand still and look away.** Many puppies won't go when someone is staring.
- 4 **Walk slowly back and forth** in a small area. Gentle movement can help things along.
- 5 **Reward the moment they go**, then turn it into a sniff walk.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Trying three fixes at once.** You won't know which one worked.
- ✗ **Giving up on a fix after two days.** Give it at least a week.
- ✗ **Scolding excited or worried peeing.** It usually makes it happen more.
- ✗ **Skipping the vet** when a problem appears suddenly.

 Your troubleshooting checklist

- ☐ Your main problem identified from the table
- ☐ One fix chosen and tried for at least a week
- ☐ Potty log used to check progress
- ☐ Accident spots enzyme-cleaned and blocked
- ☐ Vet consulted for any sudden change

CHAPTER 5

Setbacks and When to Call the Vet

House training is never a straight line. There will be weeks when you feel you're back at square one. Most of the time it's a normal wobble, and a short reset puts you back on track. Sometimes it's your puppy's body telling you something, and that's a job for your vet.

**Is this normal?**

Yes, if you see a few extra accidents during teething, after a busy week, during a change at home, or around four to six months. Small setbacks are common. It's not normal if accidents suddenly increase a lot, or come with any of the signs below: in that case, call your vet before changing your training.

● Health red flags: call your vet

You don't need to figure out what's wrong. You just need to notice and call. Pain or illness can look a lot like a training problem.

If you notice...	What to do
Frequent small pees, or peeing much more often than usual	Call your vet
Straining, squatting a long time with little or nothing coming out	Call your vet promptly
Blood in the urine or stool	Call your vet promptly
Diarrhea lasting more than a day, or with vomiting	Call your vet
Crying, whining or discomfort while peeing or pooping	Call your vet promptly
A sudden change: accidents in a puppy who was reliable	Call your vet first
Drinking much more than usual	Call your vet
Low energy, not eating, or seeming unwell with any of the above	Call your vet right away

If your puppy can't pee at all, or seems in real distress, treat it as urgent and contact your vet or an emergency clinic.

● What to bring to the vet

- **Your potty log.** Times, places and what you noticed. It's far more useful than "a lot".
- **A short video** of anything unusual, like straining or frequent squatting.
- **A list of recent changes:** food, treats, new home, new routine, new chews.
- **Ask your vet** whether you should bring a fresh sample and how to collect it.

● The 7-day reset plan

When the vet has ruled out health issues, or there are no red flags, use this mini-plan for a normal training setback.

Days 1-2

- Back to the schedule from one age step younger (see the table in Chapter 2).
- Supervision every minute your puppy is loose. Crate or pen otherwise.
- Potty log restarted.

Days 3-4

- Look at the log for patterns and add trips before danger times.
- Re-clean every past accident spot with enzyme cleaner.
- Extra-good potty treats for outdoor success.

Days 5-7

- If accidents have dropped, stretch gaps by 15-30 minutes.
- Give back one room of freedom at a time, supervised at first.
- If nothing has changed, call your vet again or a qualified reward-based trainer.

● When to call a trainer, too

Most potty problems are solved with routine, supervision and patience. Consider a qualified reward-based trainer if:

- **You've followed a clear plan for several weeks** with no improvement, and your vet has found no health cause.
- **Accidents seem linked to fear**, such as peeing when people approach, when alone, or during loud noises.
- **Accidents happen only when you're out**, with signs of panic like howling, drooling or scratching at doors. See the bonus *Home Alone Starter* and Chapter 17 of the Survival Plan.

Remember: a setback is not the end of your progress. It's just a bump in the road, and you already know the way back.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Assuming it's "just training"** when something has suddenly changed.
- ✗ **Restricting water on your own** to stop accidents. Ask your vet first.
- ✗ **Giving all the freedom back at once** after a good week.
- ✗ **Blaming yourself or your puppy.** Setbacks happen in almost every home.

 Your setback checklist

- ☐ Red flags reviewed with the whole family
- ☐ Vet called for any sudden change or red flag
- ☐ Potty log ready to show the vet
- ☐ 7-day reset plan started after health is ruled out
- ☐ Freedom given back one room at a time
- ☐ Trainer contacted if no progress after several weeks

THE END

Before You Go

House training can feel like the longest part of puppyhood. Then one day you realize there hasn't been a puddle all week, and your puppy is standing at the door, looking at you, asking to go out. That day usually sneaks up quietly.

Until then, keep it simple: read the signals, follow the routine, log the patterns, and use the troubleshooting chapter when something gets stuck. For the bigger picture of your puppy's first year, go back to *The Puppy Blues Survival Plan*.

And when other challenges show up, your other bonus guides are ready: *Land Shark Rescue* for biting, *Sleep Rescue* for crate and nights, and *Home Alone Starter* for time alone. You're doing better than you think.

This guide is a training and lifestyle resource for puppy owners. It is not veterinary or medical advice. Always follow your veterinarian for anything related to your dog's health. For aggression, strong fears or panic, consult a qualified professional.

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