

House-Training Your Dog for your Boat –

A Printable Boat Dog ‘Potty’ Training Guide

from EvenKeelTraveller.com

Simple Steps to House Train your dog for your boat...

First, ALWAYS check with your vet to make sure your dog is healthy and able to live on a boat.

Also, before you attempt this transition of life on board your boat with your dog, here are a few things to consider, so that you can make the best decision for both you and your dog:

- Your dog(s) age
- Your dog’s medical history
- Your dogs current physical condition (arthritis or other mobility issues?), allergies? Prone to infections? Does your dog react well to change or is it fearful, on the nervous side, or easily reactive? All of these are important to consider BEFORE you have your dog live on board.
- Do you have [safety netting](#) installed? We do, and we feel it’s saved our dogs from falling overboard many times. It takes a while to set up (a few days), so... **START NOW!**
- Your own stress level and patience with your dog (live aboard life can have stressful moments, consider carefully your own health and your dog’s)
- Hopefully, your dog has been on your boat many times for day trips and is used to the set up of your boat (steps/companionways, railings) and being on the water. Make sure you have already acclimated your dog to your boat for short trips (at least!). It would be unfair to expect your dog to adjust to boat life (and boat-potty training all at once), so please make sure your dog has spent sometime on the water so his stress level will not be doubled by being new to the boat, as well as new to ‘boat potty’ training.

How to house train your dog for your boat:

Once you've thoroughly (& been honest & realistic about your own patience, resolve, and your dog's health) considered the above list, and had your dog checked out by your veterinarian, (and it's given the okay to live on a boat), then go ahead & start with the steps.

A. Start with buying/installing the **safety netting**, and as you do this,

B. gradually add amounts of time on board for your dog, feeding on board etc. Move his bed/crate on board as well, both underway and docked.

C. THEN begin work on house-training your dog for the boat while OFF the boat.

The Steps:

Step 1. –

You will need the following items:

- A life jacket for your dog that does NOT cover or impede his 'FLOW" areas – test it out first!
- Any jack lines or safety lines you feel are needed for 'pottying while underway' for you, your dog, and your boat – safety first!
- 2 or 3 of **these specifically made for dog potty use turf mats** (yes, they may blow/fall overboard, you WILL want to have spares on board) ****DON'T GET REGULAR AstroTURF mats, they won't drain properly and will get stinky and gross!**
- 2 or 3 **heavy duty mats** like those for commercial kitchen use, these will provide weight on top of the Astroturf mat, traction & secure footing for your dog
- **Nature's Miracle** for cleaning up 'accidents', the ONLY product that really works to keep pets from 'return accidents'
- Your favorite carpet or wood floor stain remover (depending on your boat surfaces) in case of 'potty accidents' on board
- Paper towels

- Dog REWARD treats, our dogs [LOVE these](#) (*HINT*: if your dog has a sensitive stomach, just use his own food as a treat, *don't try out any new foods while traveling!)
- [Scented trash bags](#) for cleaning up the dog waste
- one (or 2) LARGE empty coffee canisters, they can be a can, plastic coffee jug with lid, or large coffee ziplock pouch – as long as it can be CLOSED tightly (this is to keep on deck and will store the used poop bags when you are in places where you can't throw them away) You will be glad you have these!
- ***OPTIONAL STEP that some dogs will need.*** Get 1-2 squares of sod from your local landscaper or lawn supply store
- and if you get the SOD, then you will ALSO need get 2 , (yes 2!) [sod containers \(we used these\)](#)

Step 2.

Once you have ALL your supplies, use a ladle (yes, a ladle! :-)) or a cup or even a disposable/plate, and collect your dog's urine. Also, collect a small stool sample. These will be used for 'marking' the Astroturf mats as well. Yes, I told you this would require patience and a sense of humor as well! Only a small amount of each is needed to 'mark' the turf. (not even enough for you to smell, as your dog can smell at least 200 times better than you!)

Step 3.

Take the turf mat outside in your yard (to the location that your dog typically goes potty/urinates first thing in the morning) Take a little of the fresh urine that you collected within a day or so, and sprinkle it on the green turf mat. Let it soak in, in the turf mat in grass/yard. Again, the advantage to having this Astroturf mat that is a specially made for dog potties and it easily drained and easily cleaned, and does NOT hold any odors if you rinse after use. (the dog will STILL be able to smell his urine there) (don't be tempted to use an old rug, it will CONFUSE your dog and he may use your other rugs, plus they cant be rinsed

well and will STINK!) The turf is very similar to grass and our dogs took to it right away, there was never any confusion about using any other kind of surface to 'go potty' on. You must keep your dog on a leash for potty trips for the next several days & urge it to go on the turf that's been marked with its own urine. The first potty in the morning is usually the most successful, as the dog really has an urgent need and can be easily coaxed to go on the mat, as it lays in the grass.

When the dog uses the mat for the first time (and each time thereafter), give LOTS of praise and a treat for urinating or defecating on the turf. This step should take a week or less depending on your dogs' level of flexibility and your patience.

Don't forget to reward and give lots of praise when the dog uses the turf mat. Be careful not to drag that dog over to the turf or pressure them to go on it, you don't want to make them nervous or phobic about the turf. Have a treat held over the mat if you need to. If needed, collect more urine or waste each day to mark the turf and urge the dog to use the turf, leading it in the right direction each time you go out for a potty break. This is where having two or three pieces of the Astroturf comes in handy because your dog may want to walk around and sniff before going and if you have more pieces of turf, you increase the chances that he will use one of them, and then he get the praise and reward!

**The stage may take a week or just a few days but once your dog is willing to go on the turf mat, you're pretty much home free!

Step 4.

Once you know your dog feels at home and comfortable on your boat in general, think about the best place to put the turf mat for your dog's safe 'bathroom area' use. We use the trampoline area of our catamaran, but you will have to determine the right area that's safe and convenient for your boat. Keep in mind that your dog's safety is of utmost concern here. Do not place the the mat in area where your dog is at risk of falling down or falling overboard while using

the potty. If your space is limited then make sure the area around the potty has safety netting around it. Take into consideration your lifelines/jacklines and keep a life jacket on the dog (and you) and a leash or harness on the dog while pottying too. You must escort them to the potty if the area the first several times, and *always* when underway. Plan a backup location for rough weather too, and practice with the mats there as well. Remember, even if you find what you feel is the safe comfortable location for the mat, there may always be a time with rough seas and your dog will need to relieve himself. Plan a backup location and have your dog practice using both locations equally on the boat so he knows that it's okay to 'go' in both places. Remember to give TONS of exuberant praise and reward with a treat or toy. It's so important to praise and reward lavishly when your dog uses the primary location and the backup location to relieve himself, this will go a long way to establishing his comfort level with potty training on the boat.

Step 5:

After a few days (or weeks depending on your dog), you may want to transition out of using the turf mat and just use the rubber mat for traction while using the potty. Your dog will simply get used to using that location and may no longer need the turf to feel comfortable relieving himself. Our dogs no longer use the turf or traction mat unless we are in rough seas. Our back up location for rough seas is to put down the turf and traction mats right outside our front salon door and keep the dogs on a leash and harness while they relieve themselves over the scupper, right next to the front salon door.

***Use the OPTIONAL "SOD STEP" if your dog won't even CONSIDER using the turf mat, (despite your attempts to offer treats as he steps on it, etc):** Bring a previously 'marked by your dog's urine/feces' sod square on board in the flat plastic '[underbed-sized' containers](#) listed above. (cut drain holes in one container, place the sod in the one with drain holes, and place that container inside the other (intact) container, this will help the sod drain. Place them on a steady, non-slippery area on your boat that you want to be the 'potty zone.' As

you need to, you can then empty 'liquid' from the *bottom* container and rinse it when it seems necessary. Place the 'marked' turf mat on top of the sod for a few days, as you lead your LEASHED dog to the potty area, have him step onto the marked sod, again, first thing in the morning usually brings success! Some dogs will likely be more comfortable using this sod+ turf method, rather than just the turf at first. You can then just throw the sod away after a few days, once your dog is a pro at boat potty usage! Some people keep/grow sod on board for their dogs, but it's heavy, awkward and gets stinky...try to transition to the easily clean-able /storable odor-free turf & rubber mats as soon as you can.

It takes patience and time to house train your dog for a boat...

Once your dog is 'house-potty' trained for the boat, you are no longer dependent on making multiple dinghy stops a day on land for potty breaks, or even walking your dog in the marina if it's storming! Your dog will feel happy and comfortable going to the restroom outside, on their own boat. This is not a substitute for walking your dog however as we always take every opportunity to walk our dogs and any marina or anchorage or island that feels safe for our dogs. We know and strongly believe that walking our dogs is not only essential for their physical exercise, but walking a dog is essential for their mental health as well.

CLEANING UP: The mats are easily rinsed off on the trampoline and they drain there too. (we use the hose that's already there for the windlass system) but a bucket or jug of soapy water works fine too, and just leave the turf mat, weighted down, on the deck to dry (we weight them down with the rinsed rubber mats). Those awesome turf mats dry SUPER QUICKLY and NEVER hold any odors. Also, we simply dump a bucket of soapy water to clean the mats when they are in the scupper area too. If you aren't in a place where you can dump the solid waste over, we suggest collecting it in [scented dog poop](#) bags, and then store in an old coffee container, til you can dispose of it properly.

[Leopard Catamarans](#), like the one we own, have a unique feature, a forward cockpit/lounge area. This area is particularly dog-friendly and it enabled us to feel good about bring the dogs to live aboard with us, for 2 main reasons: 1. We

can EASILY access the forward area & trampoline for accessing the bow, and for the dog's needs, through the front door. 2. The forward cockpit also has a scupper, that in case of rough seas when we can't take the dogs onto the trampoline for a break, we simply place their turf on top of the scupper and they 'go' there, and it rinses and cleans up easily! This front lounge area is also PERFECT when it's too sunny to sit in the stern lounge area. It's usually shaded and always has a great breeze! Just another reason to LOVE Leopard Cats!

****We also trained both dogs, as very young puppies, to ring a [bell that hangs on the door](#), when they NEED to go out. While some may think this is silly or unnecessary, having your dog ring a bell to go outside is incredibly handy, useful, and convenient when you are traveling. This makes ANY kind of travel much easier, especially for hotel stays or staying with family at the holidays. If you have a puppy, and want to bell train them, just let me know in a comment or email and I can explain it. It only takes about 2 weeks.**

Please keep in mind that this is what worked for *our dogs*, it may not work for your dog, because your dog may have a different training history or breed traits/personality traits or temperament that is different than our dogs. However, no matter your dogs' age or breed, if you are PATIENT, this system should work just fine for MOST dogs. Again, don't stress out your dog or yourself and try to rush this....it will only make your dog hate the boat. Please keep in mind that our system was set up by Bridget, who has trained many dogs over the years, is a certified Vet Tech, has served at several dog training nonprofits. We also consulted with a veterinarian and a Certified Guide Dog trainer on this method as well. Take your time and it can work for you too! We are happy to answer your questions about 'boat potty training' for your dog, please comment with a question below or email us at: EvenKeelTraveller@gmail.com

Pictures included on next pages (to save your printer ink!)

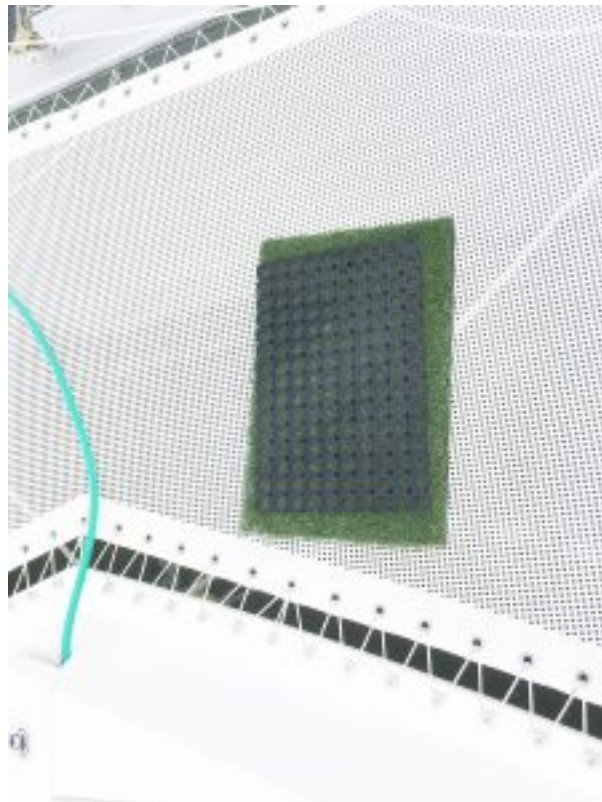
As always, we want you to know that *some* of the links above are affiliate links to products or services that we truly believe in and shared, because they are helpful & useful. So, at no additional cost to you, we'll earn a small commission if you decide to make a purchase after clicking through these links.



Morning meeting on the trampoline.



Above: Forward cockpit with mats over scupper.



Above: Special potty 'turf' with heavy grip mat on top for traction & weight.



Optional bells for dogs to ring