



House Training

House Training

If given a choice dogs prefer to eliminate away from the areas where they eat, sleep, and play. Dogs eliminate in the house for a variety of reasons:

- There might be a medical cause for the problem.
- The dog might not have been properly trained to eliminate outside.
- The dog might be marking his territory.
- The dog might urinate when excited, intimidated, anxious, or upset.

House training is accomplished by establishing a surface and location preference AND by preventing the dog from eliminating in unacceptable places. Crating and confinement needs to be kept to a minimum, but some amount of restriction is usually necessary for the puppy or dog to learn to “hold it.” Understand that house training demands an investment of time and effort. Puppies are sometimes not fully house trained until they are 8-12 months of age. As a general rule, a puppy can only hold his waste for the same number of hours that he is old, in months. In other words, a four-month-old pup should not be left alone during the day longer than four consecutive hours without an opportunity to go outside. By the time the pup is four months old, he should be able to make it through the night without going outside. Adult dogs adopted from shelters are often not fully housetrained and need a refresher course.

What to do:

1. Keep the dog on a consistent daily feeding schedule and remove food between meals.
2. Know where your dog is at all times. To anticipate and prevent accidents, you need to watch for early signs that he needs to eliminate. These signs include pacing, whining, circling, sniffing and leaving the room. If you see any of these, take the dog outside as quickly as possible. Not all dogs learn to let their owner know they need to go outside by barking or scratching at the door. Some will pace a bit and then just eliminate inside.
3. If you cannot watch the dog, confine him to a crate, a small room (with the door closed or baby-gated), or tether him to you with a leash that does not give him much leeway. Gradually, over days or weeks, give the dog more freedom. If the dog eliminates outside, give him some free time in the house (maybe 15-20 minutes to start). If all goes well, gradually increase the amount of time out of confinement.
4. Accompany the dog outside and reward him with praise, treats, play, or a walk whenever he eliminates outdoors. It’s best to take the dog to the same place each time, as the smells may prompt the dog to eliminate. Some dogs will eliminate early on in a walk; others need to move about and play for a bit first.



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House Training (cont.)

5. Take the dog outside on a consistent schedule. Puppies should be taken out every hour, as well as shortly after meals, playtime and naps. All dogs should get out first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and before being confined or left alone. Adult dogs must get out at least four times a day.
6. If you can catch the dog in the act of eliminating inside, make loud noises. Immediately run to the dog and rush him outside. If he is small, pick him up; otherwise, just grab him by the collar and run outside with him. The idea is to startle him, which should stop him in mid-stream. Allow the dog to finish outside, and reward him. If you do not catch the dog in the act, do not do anything to the dog.
7. Clean accidents with an enzymatic cleanser to minimize odors that might attract the dog back to the same spot.

What not to do:

- Do not rub the dog's nose in his elimination (this teaches him nothing).
- Do not scold the dog, unless you catch him in the act of eliminating in an inappropriate place.
- Never, ever physically punish the dog for accidents; that includes hitting with a rolled-up newspaper.
- If the dog enjoys being outside, don't bring the dog inside right after he eliminates—he may learn to “hold it” to stay outside.
- Do not use an ammonia-based cleanser. As urine contains ammonia, this could attract the dog back to the same spot to urinate again.

Above all, please be patient! If your dog has an accident, it is not because he is spiteful or lacking in the ability to learn—it's because the owner failed to adequately supervise him, didn't take him outside frequently enough, or ignored or was unaware of the dog's signals to go outside.

For AAWL adopters who need more information or if you have additional questions, please call our Behavior Helpline at 602-273-6852 ext. 124.