

House Training Your Dog
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Little can get a dog into trouble faster than using the house as a toilet. None of us like to come home to puddles or piles. Housetraining your dog is absolutely essential if your companion is to become an integrated member of the household. If your adult dog is having accidents in your home, first have it checked by a vet to be sure that there is no physical reason for the problem (infection, etc.). If all checks out at the vet's, then training is in order.

I particularly like the approach suggested by Job Michael Evans in his book, "The Evans Guide for Housetraining Your Dog". Evans devotes more than 100 pages to his technique and my dogs can attest to the fact that it works, and works well. When I was tempted to try a short cut, I ended up regretting it. I hope you will give it a try.

When I housetrain a new dog, the first thing I do is accompany the dog on all trips outside to where I wish them to potty (a particular spot in the yard perhaps). As the dog is in the process of eliminating, I use a particular command during the entire performance ("hurry up" is always nice). From the second the dog begins to urinate I repeat this command over and over again. As soon as it stops, I stop and praise the dog like crazy. I repeat this command for several months whenever the dog potties (I know, it seems like a long time). The end result is that the dog begins to associate the word/phrase with the deed and soon potties on command (great when you are in a hurry). They also quickly learn to do their thing in a particular area.

When we are in the house, the dog is either confined (in a crate) or under my direct supervision. By direct supervision, I mean the dog can do absolutely nothing without my observing it. This is accomplished by literally tying the dog to me (a rope around the waist works great). Thus secured, the dog cannot make a mistake without you knowing about it instantly. This allows you to correct the dog immediately or even keep the accident from happening in the first place. The dog can not wander off and have an accident unseen. You are setting the dog up for success because you can train them effectively and immediately.

When the dog is not tied to my waist, it is confined (usually in a crate). Most dogs will not soil their crate unless they have no other choice so the crate becomes an excellent housetraining tool. Just remember not to use the crate as a crutch and over confine the dog.

Make sure you schedule adequate opportunities for the dog to eliminate. When possible, I will often take a new dog out every hour or two at first to give it every chance to potty in the appropriate area. As the dog begins to get the idea, I increase the time between the designated potty breaks.

Since the dog is tied to me, I usually know instantly the moment the dog becomes restless or assumes "the stance". I can often respond with a simple "no", rush the dog outside and then praise like crazy when the dog goes in the designated area. Should I be in a fog and catch the dog in the act, I discipline with a firm "no", and again, rush the dog outside. Lots of praise should follow when the dog potties outside.

Another good author on the subject of housetraining is Carol Lea Benjamin. I particularly like her small paperback, "The Chosen Puppy". Her technique (similar to Evans') carries over to adult dogs very well and can be summarized as "give it a name, use a crate and a schedule and remember to praise".

Should you have any questions about house training your dog, I would encourage you to do some additional reading on your own. Good luck and don't give up! I haven't found a dog yet that couldn't be housetrained given time and training.