



Re-Housetraining Your Adult Dog

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Many adult dogs adopted from animal shelters were housetrained in their previous homes. While at the shelter, however, they may not have received enough opportunities to eliminate outside, and consequently, may have soiled their kennel area. This tends to weaken their housetraining habits. Additionally, scents and odors from other pets in the new home may stimulate some initial urine marking. Remember that you and your new dog need some time to learn each other's signals and routines. Even if he was housetrained in his previous home, if you don't recognize his "bathroom" signal, which may be nothing more than sniffing or staring at you, you might miss his request to go out, causing him to eliminate indoors.

Therefore, for the first few weeks after you bring him home, you should assume your new dog isn't housetrained and start from scratch. If he was housetrained in his previous home, the re-training process should progress quickly. The process will be much smoother if you take steps to prevent accidents and remind him where he's supposed to eliminate.

Establish a Routine

- Take your dog out at the same times every day. For example, first thing in the morning when he wakes up, when you arrive home from work, after he eats, before you go to bed, etc. When you are home, take him out regularly, maybe once every hour for the first few weeks, to give him plenty of opportunities to eliminate outdoors.
- Praise your dog lavishly if he eliminates outdoors. You can even give him a treat. You must praise him and give him a treat immediately after he's finished and not wait until after he has come back into the house. This step is vital, because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the only way he'll know that's what you want him to do.
- If you have taken your dog out and you are sure he has to eliminate and he did not do so, do not allow him free access to the house. Confine him or tether him to you for 10 minutes, then take him out and try again. Keep repeating until you are sure he has done *all* his business.
- Choose a location not too far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your dog, on a leash, directly to the bathroom spot. Take him for a walk or play with him only after he has eliminated. While your puppy is eliminating, use a word or phrase, like "go potty," that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him of what he's supposed to be doing.
- Feeding your dog on a set schedule, once or twice a day, will help make his elimination more regular.

Supervise, Supervise, Supervise

Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house. He should be watched at all times when he is indoors. You can tether him to you with a six-foot leash, or use baby gates, to keep him in the room where you are. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate, like sniffing around or circling. When you see these signs, immediately take him outside, on a leash, to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him lavishly and reward him with a treat.

Oops!

Your dog has an accident in the house, what now?

- When you catch him in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt him, like make a startling noise (be careful not to scare him.) Immediately take him to his bathroom spot, praise him and give him a treat if he finishes eliminating there.

- Don't punish your dog for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, it's too late to administer a correction. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your dog's nose in it, taking him to the spot and scolding him, or any other punishment or discipline, will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals don't understand punishment after the fact, even if it's only seconds later. Punishment will do more harm than good.
- Cleaning the soiled area is very important because dogs are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces. Use an enzymatic cleaner to help ensure the scent is gone.

It's extremely important that you use supervision and confinement procedures to minimize the number of accidents. If you allow your dog to eliminate frequently in the house, he'll get confused about where he's supposed to eliminate which will prolong the housetraining process.

Other Types of House-Soiling Problems

If you've consistently followed the housetraining procedures and your dog continues to eliminate in the house, there may be another reason for his behavior.

- **Medical Problems:** House soiling can often be caused by physical problems such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Check with your veterinarian to rule out any possibility of disease or illness.
- **Submissive/Excitement Urination:** Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings, intense play or when they're about to be punished.
- **Territorial Urine-Marking:** Dogs sometimes deposit urine or feces, usually in small amounts, to scent mark their territory. Both male and female dogs do this, and it most often occurs when they believe their territory has been invaded.
- **Separation Anxiety.** Dogs that become anxious when they're left alone may house soil as a result. Usually, there are other symptoms, such as destructive behavior or vocalization.
- **Fears Or Phobias.** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your puppy is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, he may house soil when he's exposed to these sounds.