

Going Once, Going Twice - House-training your dog

By Wendy Van Kerkhove – Fresh Air Training
www.freshairtraining.com

Have you given up hope of having a house-trained dog? You're not alone. Many people share their homes with adult dogs that are not completely house-trained. Incomplete house-training can usually be blamed on inconsistent humans. But often the dog gets the blame. This behavior can be altered, but it takes practice, patience and consistency.

Dogs can learn at any age

No matter your dog's age or size, she can be house-trained at any time. Small dogs have the reputation of being hard to house-train, but a more reasonable theory is that it's easier to tolerate a puddle that's roughly the size of a quarter or poop with similar dimensions to a tootsie roll than a gushing river, or worse.

From a dog's perspective, she feels discomfort so she wanders into a room and squats. She wasn't caught in the act and she experienced a positive outcome —relief. As long as this is regularly happening, your dog is well on her way to a lifetime of eliminating in the house unless things change.

Setting up for success

For successful house-training, you must remove the potential for all accidents. You need to catch your dog in the act of eliminating, interrupt the behavior and take her outside to finish. All positive outcomes such as praise or treats must be rewarded either during "the act" or within a couple seconds of completion.

Useful tools: crates and tethers

If you can't closely watch your dog while indoors, then she must be crated or tethered. Dogs will try not to eliminate when crated, but if the amount of time they are left kenneled exceeds their bladder capacity, accidents will happen. If need be, come home during your lunchtime or hire a dog walker to let the dog outside.

If your dog is not crate trained, then tethering is a great alternative. Use your dog's leash and tether her to an immovable object in the room that you are in. Your dog will have some freedom but will not be able to wander out of the "tether zone." If you're always on the go, then tether the dog to yourself. By doing this, when your dog has "to go," you'll catch her in the act and be able to interrupt the behavior and rush her outside to finish. Additionally, there is a good chance that you will start to notice your dog's pre-elimination cues, which may be very subtle. Eventually, you'll look at your dog and think, "The last time I saw you sniff the ground in that manner you squatted. I'm going to take you out right now." As a side note: Using the tethering technique can greatly reduce damage done to your home by a puppy because her access to chewable items such as a dining room chair, will be limited.

Thoroughly clean areas of previous accidents with a neutralizing agent and prevent access to these spots by keeping doors shut or placing something over them. Once your dog has gone accident-free for about three weeks, you're well on your way to success. If you are following the rules and still having problems, a **medical condition** might be the cause, so a trip to the vet will be in order.

Don't give up hope! Old dogs can learn new tricks and this is one every dog should know.

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