



Houstraining the Adult Dog

We can houstrain dogs because they are carnivores. All carnivores eliminate away from their den for safety and sanitation. We have problems because our 'dens' are large, and we expect too much too soon. Dogs that have not been houstrained can take some time to adjust. They have to unlearn previous habits.

Keep your dog with you, tied to you or confined when you can't watch him; take him out every two to three hours. That way you can praise him when he eliminates, and bring him back in the house with you. If you just put him outside, he may feel abandoned, or he may get into mischief. Leave a leash on him, even if he's in the same room with you. If he makes a mistake, say "oops!" or "uh-uh," pick his leash quickly but unemotionally, and take him outside. Wait for him to eliminate, then praise, and return to the house. Teach your dog a phrase that he can connect with the act of elimination. To do that, you wait till the action is happening, then give it a name. Then, as he learns it, ask him if he wants to "do his business" (or whatever phrase you have taught), right before you take him out. When he gets excited or circles, praise him, take him outside, watch him eliminate, then praise and play with him as a reward. Never rub your dog's nose in his stool. At best, it has no effect; at worst, the dog tries to please by eating what he figures you're offering, or reacts with disgust and growls or snaps. Punishing your dog after the fact never works. If the dog has made a mistake (or has chewed something he shouldn't, or otherwise been destructive), and you don't catch him in the act, it's finished. If you catch him, then say 'no,' and take him out for awhile. It's much better to avoid the mistake by confining the dog in a pen, a crate or one puppy-proofed room. Be patient, persistent, and consistent, and you will eventually be successful.

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