

# House Training Your Adult Dog

Many adult shelter dogs have been house trained in the past, so all that's needed is a refresher lesson or two. In some cases though, you'll be starting from square one. Either way, following the list below as soon as you get home will get you and your new dog on the fastest road to success.

House training boils down to two techniques: **preventing accidents** and **rewarding successes**. To do this, for the first couple of weeks, make sure your dog is always in 1 of 3 locations:

- Outside with you (so you can see your dog eliminate and reward him on the spot)
- Inside with your supervision (so you can see the signs that he needs to go outside)
- In a crate or small confinement area when you can't supervise (they won't soil where they sleep, so this prevents accidents and teach him to "hold it")

## Post-Adoption Adult House Training Checklist

- Expect confusion and mistakes the first few days, even in a trained dog.
- Set your new dog up for success by using a crate or small confinement area to prevent accidents. Dogs prefer not to soil where they eat and sleep, so when kept in a crate or kitchen area, they learn to "hold it." Crating and confinement should be kept to a minimum, no more than 3 to 4 hours at a stretch.
- If you're using a crate, it should be just large enough for him to turn around, stand up, and stretch out.
- If you're using a confinement area, confine to one uncarpeted room with pet gates. (Kitchens are ideal.)
- Keep your dog on a consistent daily feeding schedule and remove food between meals. Predictable meals lead to predictable elimination, which helps you house train.
- Take your dog outside on a consistent and frequent schedule, including:
  - First thing in the morning
  - Last thing at night
  - After eating
  - Every 2 to 3 hours (later you can stretch it out to 4 to 5 hours)
  - Before being confined or left alone

- If your dog doesn't eliminate on any particular outing, try again an hour later. Fully house-trained adult dogs should have the chance to eliminate outside at least four times a day.
- Accompany your dog outside to eliminate rather than sending him out alone so that 1) you know whether he's actually gone or not, and 2) you can reward him with praise and a treat right on the spot, just as he is finishing up.
- Praise and reward all outdoor elimination for the first few days. You can slack off a bit later, although it's always good to praise.
- Go to the same spot to make it easier, or at least to the same type of surface.
- Keep in mind that some dogs tend to eliminate right when they go outside, but others need to move around and sniff for a bit first.
- Supervise indoors whenever your dog is not in his crate, and watch for signs that she needs to eliminate so that you can anticipate and prevent accidents from happening. Signs include pacing, whining, circling, sniffing or leaving the room. If you see any of these, quickly take your dog outside.
- When you can't watch your dog, confine her to a crate, put her in a small room with the door or a baby gate closed, or tie her to your waist with a leash.
- Gradually, over days or weeks, give your dog more freedom. Right after she eliminates outside, give her some free time in the house (about a half hour to start). If all goes well, gradually increase the amount of time your dog spends out of her confinement area.
- Gradually extend the time between outings, until you're at about 4 to 5 hours maximum. (Yes, some dogs can hold it longer, but it's stressful and painful, just like it is for us.)
- If you catch your dog in the act of eliminating in the house, clap loudly, "Ah, ah! Let's go outside!" Just enough to startle but not scare your dog. Then hustle her outside to finish. If she finishes, praise and reward.
- If you find an accident after the fact, do nothing to your dog. She can't connect any kind of punishment with something she did hours or even a minute ago. Punishment will only teach her to avoid you when she feels the need, rather than come to find you. Punishment is why some dogs start to house soil behind their owners' backs, in other rooms, behind furniture, or when their owners aren't home.
- Clean all accidents thoroughly with an enzymatic cleanser designed for pet odors, such as Nature's Miracle or Out! to prevent your dog from being drawn back to the scent.
- If you're unable to get your dog outside quickly enough, possibly because of mobility problems (yours or your dog's), or if you live in an apartment, consider training your dog to eliminate on paper or in a dog litter box. Ask us for further information.



## Crate & Confinement Training Tips

- Begin crate and/or confinement training to a dog-proofed room the first day!
- Start by teaching your dog to go inside the crate or area for small, tasty food rewards. When he's comfortable going in, practice closing the door for 1 to 2 seconds for a treat.
- Put the crate next to your sofa, rent a video, and keep your dog in the crate next to you while he gets to work on a stuffed Kong or other dog chewy (pig's ear or bully stick). If you're using a confinement area, hang out with your dog there reading, while your dog works on chewies.
- The first two or three times you leave the dog alone in his crate or confinement area, he should be **tired** (just exercised), the time should be **short** (15-30 minutes), and he should have a good **chewy**.