

Rovers Return Dog Rescue (RRR)

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How to Potty Train an Adult Dog

Potty training an adult dog can be very similar to training a puppy, depending on the circumstances. Some adult dogs may have never been taught to go to the bathroom outside, so their muscles will need to be trained to hold their excrement.

Have your new pet examined by a veterinarian to ensure that they are healthy and don't have any underlying conditions that could prevent them from being successfully potty trained.

Generally, a dog is considered potty trained if he has gone one month without any accidents in the house. If it has been over a month and you are still having trouble, you may need to speak to your veterinarian or a trainer for additional advice.

Do's of Potty Training an Adult Dog

You may wish to say a phrase like "bathroom" or "potty" each time you take your dog outside so that they start to associate that phrase with eliminating. Here are some more tips to potty train your adult dog successfully.

Set a Schedule

As with puppies, potty training an adult dog should begin with developing a schedule that both you and your dog can follow, and feeding two meals daily at around the same time each day. Adult dogs also naturally eliminate shortly after eating, so developing a consistent schedule of eating and potty breaks can avoid confusion and accidents in the house.

Limit Your Dog's Space While Potty Training

For adult dogs entering a new home, it is important to limit the amount of space they have access to while the house-training process is still in progress. This can be accomplished with baby gates or crate training. Each time your dog eliminates outside without accidents in the house, you can gradually increase the amount of space that they have access to.

Use Crate Training to Help With Potty Training

Crate training is also effective for adult dogs. Like puppies, they do not like to eliminate where they sleep or eat, so they will avoid eliminating in a crate they have come to call home. The crate you use to train your dog should only have enough room for them to stand up, turn around, and lie down.

While you are potty training, your dog should be crated during naptime and bedtime, and whenever your dog cannot be directly supervised. Never use the crate as a means of punishment. It is important to note that adult dogs may take more time to adjust to a crate. If your dog is showing signs of stress or anxiety with crate training, contact your veterinarian for other options.

Use Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement isn't just for puppies—it's the key to successful potty training for any dog, including adults. Each time your dog eliminates outside, reward them with verbal praise, treats, or a favorite toy. Just as with puppies, positive reinforcement will teach your adult dog that they get rewarded for going to the bathroom outside. Give the reward immediately after your dog eliminates outside, so that your dog makes a positive association with that behavior.

Recognize When Your Dog Needs to Go Out

Learning your adult dog's signs that they need to eliminate will prevent unnecessary accidents in the house. Just like puppies, adult dogs often sit by the door, whine, wander off, sniff, or make circles when they need to go to the bathroom.



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Walk Your Dog on a Leash Instead of Just Letting Them Out in the Yard

During potty training, you should always walk your adult dog on leash to the appropriate elimination area. This ensures you will be close by to reward their good behavior. After giving a positive reward, remember to play with your dog outside for a few minutes to avoid creating a negative connection between eliminating and returning inside.

Don'ts of Potty Training an Adult Dog

Don't fall into these traps while potty training your adult dog.

Mixing Puppy Pads With Crate Training

Allowing your adult dog to eliminate on potty pads inside the house can be confusing for them as they're learning which areas are appropriate potty spots (and which aren't). This may slow down the potty training process and should be avoided if possible.

Using Punishment Instead of Positive Reinforcement

Whether you're training a puppy or an adult dog, punishment is **never** acceptable or successful. Never hit your dog with anything or rub their face in their excrement when your dog has an accident—these outdated tactics have been proven ineffective.

Dogs that are punished will often become fearful of their owners or other people who try to punish them. Potty training can be frustrating, but remember to practice patience and kindness, no matter how old your dog is!

Keeping Inconsistent Schedules

Failing to adhere to a regular routine can confuse your dog, leading to potty accidents in the house. Remember: It is your job to create and maintain a schedule, keeping constant watch over your dog. The more opportunities your dog has for successful elimination outside, the faster the potty training process will go!

Resources: Brister J. Housetraining and crate training Dogs. Veterinary Information Network. <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=8562851>
Stepita Meredith. Housetraining and adult dog or rescue. Veterinary Information Network. <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=4951739>



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