



The Underdog Training "So Your Dog" Series, Topic Two

So Your Dog- Toilets in the house

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Having trouble with your dog toileting inappropriately? After ruling out any physical issues with your veterinarian, it's important to get started as soon as possible teaching your dog where you would like them to toilet. Each time your dog has an accident in the house; it reinforces the behaviour so time is of the essence!

Why do dogs toilet in the house or in inappropriate areas?

There are a number of reasons why a dog may toilet in the house- understanding why your dog toilets in the house can help to relieve any frustration you might be feeling about these accidents. Your dog may toilet inappropriately because-

- They have a physical issue such as a urinary infection that needs resolution. A veterinary check should be your first port of call, particularly if this is a new problem that has suddenly started.
- They have moved house, their routine has changed or their toileting area has been moved or altered.
- They have not been toilet trained before or may have been outside only dogs.
- You have recently adopted the dog and they may not be sure where the toileting area actually is!
- They have been punished harshly for toileting in the presence of a person and have learned to hide accidents in other rooms or areas of the house.
- The dog may be a puppy or young dog who cannot yet physically hold on to their bladder.
- Male AND female dogs may mark in the house when reaching maturity or after other dogs have visited the home.
- Older female dogs may suffer from urinary incontinence- this is not something your dog can control and it's important to speak with your vet regarding effective treatment and medication if needed.
- They have anxiety issues which contribute to inappropriate elimination
- Consider your dog's diet as this can also impact toileting habits. Foods with large amounts of grain or fillers can make it difficult for a dog to hold on and excessive salt resulting in increased water intake can also make it difficult for your dog to toilet appropriately.

How to Toilet Train Your Dog!

- **Decide** where you would like your dog to toilet. It's important that your dog toilets on a consistent surface type- we generally recommend natural materials like grass or mulch rather than hard surfaces. Ensure the area you would like your dog to toilet is an area where your dog regularly has access.
- **Is your dog having accidents over night?** Consider crate training your dog. Crate training involves providing a confined area for your dog to sleep. The area should be big enough for your dog to comfortably lie, stretch and turn around in but NOT big enough for the dog to sleep at one end and toilet at the other. Dogs do not like to soil their sleeping area so by confining your dog for this period, it will encourage your dog to hold on to their bladder/ bowel AND to let you know when they need to toilet. This may mean that someone needs to get up during the night to allow the dog to relieve themselves in the correct area. The time frame the dog can hold on for can gradually be extended over a number of weeks until the dog is consistently sleeping through the night without accident. The crate also ensures that your dog does not have the opportunity to be destructive, bark at possums etc.- meaning everyone can get a good night's sleep!
- **During the day** your dog should not be crated for long periods. We need to determine the best places for the dog to spend their time to minimise any potential for accidents. Where your dog spends time may vary depending on your home situation and whether you are home or at work.
- **When you are AWAY from the home** the dog should be in a situation where it's difficult for them to make a mistake. This approach is called errorless learning and is best achieved by the dog spending time in a secure, entertaining backyard if possible. If the dog needs to toilet, they are already outside so there will be no indoor mishaps. For those of you who have dogs indoors for whatever reason (apartment living etc.), set up an area (not the whole house) where you can place the dog to limit any accidents AND set up this area as follows. One third of the area should be the dog's toileting area and should have a similar surface to the outdoor surface used outside- fake grass can be excellent for this purpose. The second third of the area should contain the dog's food and water bowls. The food bowls do not have to have food in them but the dog should believe that they may be fed there at some stage- remember dogs don't like to toilet where they sleep or eat. The final third of your dogs play area should have their bedding, crate if applicable and a variety of toys. This type of set up encourages your dog to go to the correct area in your absence.
- **When you are AT home** and your dog is inside you MUST supervise. Umbilical training can be helpful- this involves having a lead attached to you at one end and your dog at the other and prevents them from wandering off in the house to toilet. If while supervising your dog goes to have an accident, DON'T yell at or frighten them! Simply take them by the collar and without picking them up, direct them to where they should have toileted instead. Picking the dog up sends mixed messages so as tempting as it may be with smaller dogs- it's important to make them walk to the correct toileting area.
- **Take the dog** outside to toilet after eating, playing and sleeping. PRAISE the dog when he toilets in the designated area- food rewards can be used intermittently to help the process.
- Ensure your dog is not present when you clean accidents- some dogs can associate the cleaning with a game so put the dog in another room or outside before cleaning. Clean with products that do not contain ammonia. Ammonia encourages the dog to toilet in the same place again so clean instead with products especially designed to clean dog accidents like "Urine off".
- **If you have put your dog outside alone** to toilet, before bringing them back in spend a minute or two outside with them. Some dogs become anxious or simply distracted when outside alone and then if let inside will immediately toilet- this can be frustrating but your dog is not doing this to annoy you! Rather they just need to be given the opportunity to toilet when relaxed to help get the right idea.
- **BE PATIENT.** Toilet training can take some time. We don't consider a dog completely toilet trained until 1 month after their last accident so **STAY VIGILANT** for this time. Relaxing too early can result in your dog regressing and your hard work will have to start again!

The information provided in the So Your Dog Series is general in nature. We recommend seeing a qualified dog trainer and having a veterinary examination completed for the best results in resolving your dogs problems. For further information or training options, go to www.underdogtraining.com.au