

# Early Training - *House Breaking*

Dog owners call us every day with questions about housebreaking. Too often we hear that a dog was acquired to be an indoor animal but because he soils the house, he has been relegated to a life in the yard. Our goal at Dog Trainers Workshop is to help train dogs to be welcome and enjoyable members of the family. In order to do this, one of our first jobs is to help you get your dog housebroken.

## Basic Principals

Housebreaking a dog can be quite simple, if you understand some basic principles and follow some simple rules.

### Dens and Rooms

Dogs are naturally den animals, so a dog does not want to go to the bathroom where he lives. Most of us live in homes that are so big that, unfortunately, the dog does not equate our entire house with his den. Therefore, it is important to keep a dog that is not housebroken in the same room with you. If you let him leave the room, he will equate this with leaving the den, and think it is acceptable to go to the bathroom. If you are in the bedroom, shut him in the bedroom with you. If you go to the kitchen, take him with you. If it is not possible to shut a door, put up a gate or tie him in the room with you.

### Activities, Not Clocks

Don't watch the clock to determine when your dog needs to go outside; his activity causes his need to go to the bathroom, not the time that has elapsed. He should be taken outside every time your dog changes activities. If he wakes up, take him out, stops playing, out he goes, stops eating, out again. Take him out before the accident occurs.

### Watch for Signals

Do not think it is the dog's responsibility to let you know when he needs to go out. Instead, watch for his signals to you that he needs to go outside. The signals may be subtle like walking toward the door or sniffing and walking in

circles.

### Accidents

If your dog goes to the bathroom in front of you, make an exclamation of disgust and take him outside-'no' or 'bad dog' is sufficient. It is not necessary to drag him to the mess or to rub his nose in it.

If your dog does go to the bathroom in the house while you are not watching, there is absolutely nothing that you can do for correction because dogs do not remember and feel responsible for past actions. If you drag a dog to an old mess and make a fuss, he does not say to himself, "I went to the bathroom there 20-minutes ago, which is why my owner is upset."

Rather, he records the situation and makes sure the situation does not occur again. In this case, the dog records, 'If my owner is present, and I am present, and a mess is present, I will get scolded.' The next time there is a mess on the floor and he hears you coming, he will run.

### Situations

Our tendency is to give the dog human reason and emotions. Owners call me and say, "But I know my dog knew he was bad, he ran from me and he looked guilty." He is not running from you because he understands that he is responsible for the mess; he is not running because he realizes that if he stays in the situation that includes him, you, and the mess he will be scolded.

If you question this observation, pour a glass of water on the floor, Then, talk to the dog in the same tone of voice you use when you find a mess on the floor. He will undoubtedly slink away from you just as he does when the mess is his. This should prove that it is not his guilt that makes him leave, but your reaction to the situation.

See also: [Crate Training](#)

*[Connie Cleveland](#)*  
*[Dog Trainers Workshop](#)*

This series of articles is written by Connie Cleveland of founder of [Dog Trainers Workshop](#) located in South Carolina. Connie is a frequent contributor to Front and Finish and Golden Retriever News. Connie has generously given PSLRA permission to use her articles on our website.

Thank you Connie!