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Potty training

Yes, you can potty train your dog no matter how young or how old she is.

The truth is your dog really doesn't know where it's appropriate to eliminate and where it is not. Dogs only have two criteria for where they relieve themselves. First, it must not be near their food or sleeping place. Second, it should be absorbent. That means grass is a good bet. But your carpet and rugs also fit the bill. Now the question. How do we show the dog which place is *our* first choice for her toilet?

Begin by eliminating any chance your dog will eliminate in the house. To achieve that you will have to make sure your dog is always interacting with you (supervise, supervise, supervise) or safely confined. The one question you should *never* have to ask yourself is "where is the dog?" This is called errorless potty training. There is now no chance your dog can make a mistake – unless you do.

At the same time, show your dog that eliminating outdoors is an excellent choice. As soon as your dog has completed urinating or defecating, give her three delicious treats one after the other. You are now showing her that she can trade in her urine and feces for treats! Do it right on the spot. Don't wait for her to come back in. If you are clicker training, click and treat right after she's done. If you'd like to show your dog exactly where she is to eliminate, take her to that spot on her leash. As soon as she's done, treat or click and treat.

It's important that you never punish your dog for eliminating. Mistakes you catch should be handled by calmly but quickly taking your dog outdoors to her potty spot. Punishing or even yelling will encourage her not to potty *in front of you*. It won't teach her anything about indoors versus outdoors. Missed mistakes are just that. They are ancient history. Let it go. Do a better job of supervising or confining next time.

If you are potty training a puppy, take her out every hour. Older puppies can only physically hold it about an hour for every month in age they are (4 month old puppy = 4 to 5 hours maximum). Expect your puppy to eliminate more than once

on every journey out (two puddles and two piles as author, Joel Walton CPDT puts it). Take your puppy out immediately after sleep, play or feeding.

Potty training can take as little as a few weeks and as much as a few months. In either case, experiment with giving your dog more freedom a little at a time. Your efforts now will pay off significantly in the long run.

If you need more help with potty training or stopping your dog from urine marking, call a North Coast Dogs Trainer.