



## ESL-K9 (English as a Second Language for Dogs)

# Bathroom Etiquette

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Teach your dog quickly where to use the bathroom using positive reinforcement and management.

### What does that mean?

- Positive reinforcement = reward your dog for using the bathroom outside.
- Management =
  - confine your dog in the house where accidents are not likely (see crate training), and
  - give your dog ample opportunity to use the bathroom outside.

### The Steps:

- Take your dog outside, on leash, to the spot of choice.
- Softly and persistently remind your dog to “potty” (use any word you’re comfortable repeating in public).
- Remain focused. Do not play with or distract your dog intentionally during this time.
- **If your dog takes advantage** of this opportunity:
  - Enthusiastically congratulate your dog. (**NOTE:** if your enthusiasm has your dog cowering, back off a bit... you want to see that tail wagging and confident posture!)
  - Give a treat if you wish.
  - Go back into the house for a timed free roam.
- **If your dog does NOT take advantage** of this opportunity:
  - Return to the confined space (not as a punishment... see crate training).
  - Tether (or leash your dog to you) to keep your dog from going “out of sight”.
  - Give your dog another opportunity outside in 10 minutes or so.
- **Note:** This level of commitment on your part is temporary. Most dogs learn the rules within a couple of weeks (with minor relapses) if you are consistent and patient. Leashing and confining in the house are short term commitments.

### Stuck?

Get help if you’re frustrated and/or don’t understand why it’s not working. Typically one session will get you back on track and unlimited email support until your dog understands. Email [heidi@redrovercomeover.com](mailto:heidi@redrovercomeover.com) or call 615.227-7709.

## Troubleshooting:

- My dog urinates outside and returns to the house to urinate again.
  - Your dog may have been distracted midstream. Know your dog's habits so you will be aware of how much urination is normal and when it is stopped prematurely.
  - If your dog is an unneutered male approximately 6 months or older, marking could be the issue. If your male dog is lifting his leg and urinating small amounts on many small spots you may need a trainer for more assistance.
- My dog waits until I'm not looking or goes to a hidden area to use the bathroom in the house.
  - This is a classic example of what happens when we punish dogs for using the bathroom inside the house. Dogs usually misunderstand the timing of that punishment and seem to assume instead, "I shouldn't go to the bathroom in front of my person."
  - Ideally your dog will not have any need to use the bathroom in the house because he/she'll have been outside enough to take care of that need.
  - Your dog may have not finished outside. Know your dog's habits so you will be aware of how much urination is normal and when it is stopped prematurely.

## Tips:

- **Try taking your dog to the same are in the yard.** The smells often help dogs remember the purpose of this visit.
- **Use a leash.** If you let your dog out in a fenced yard unsupervised, you will not know if your dog has eliminated. Consider if you had only one, 10-minute opportunity to use the bathroom in the morning. What if you could smell coffee or hear visitors in the next room? Can you go on command?
- **Know your dog's habits.** When is she/he most likely to need an opportunity to urinate or defecate? Does one urination stream empty the bladder?
- **The fewer accidents in the house, the faster your dog will learn.** Take full responsibility for these accidents. Your dog has no idea what you want regarding bathroom location until you successfully teach him/her. This is potentially very confusing for your dog. Our houses are much bigger than any space a canine would normally maintain!
- **Crate training:** take advantage of your dog's natural tendency not to use the bathroom in their sleeping/eating/playing space to help your house training efforts. See the crate-training flyer for more information.
- **Once the training takes hold, remember to teach your dog how to let you know when he/she needs to go outside.** Some clever ideas:
  - Teach your dog to bark at the door (this may not be wise for vocal dogs...).
  - Hang a bell on the door for your dog to ring.
  - Place a wireless doorbell on the floor for your dog to press. Program the bell to play "Who Let the Dogs Out".