

Companion Animal Psychology

By Zazie Todd, PhD. Happy cats. Happy dogs. Thanks to science.

[Home](#) [All About Cats](#) [All About Dogs](#) [Animal Book Club](#) [Subscribe](#) [About Companion Animal Psychology](#)

12 December 2018

Don't Punish Your Dog for Peeing in the House

Why punishment is the wrong approach for house training mistakes, and what you should do instead.



Photo: mannpuku/Shutterstock

Suppose your [dog](#) suddenly starts to pee in the house. You clean it up the first time but it happens again.... And then again.

Or your new puppy keeps having accidents indoors even though you take her outside often.

In this situation, some people will yell at their dog. Some might even try physical punishment like hitting the dog or an alpha roll. And we've all come across the advice that you should rub their nose in it.

Don't do it.

Here's why that's the wrong approach, and what you should do instead.

Punishment can make things worse

First of all, let's think about it from the dog's perspective.

Suppose they pee in the house and you yell at them. What do they learn from this?

It's unlikely the dog will understand why you are yelling. This is especially the case if there is a time lag between the mess being made and you discovering it.

Unfortunately what they might learn is not to pee in front of you. From the dog's perspective, this is what causes the yelling, not peeing in the house. The dog may also feel afraid of you.

What can happen is that when the dog wants to pee, they now want to do so out of sight of you. I'm sure you've heard people tell tales of how the dog 'sneaks off' to go and pee in another room, or waits until they are out.

This means that aside from not solving the problem, punishing the dog actually makes the problem worse because it means the dog is now scared to pee in front of you outside.

This can make resolving house training issues even harder. They may avoid urinating on walks, instead waiting until they are home and you are not there.

Follow

Contact Zazie Todd, PhD

Email companionanimalpsych@gmail.com.

Love Companion Animal Psychology?

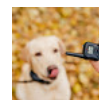
[Support Me on Ko-fi](#)



Trending This Week



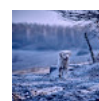
[Eight Tips to Help Fearful Dogs Feel Safe](#)



[Study outlines reasons to ban electronic collars for dogs](#)



[Don't Punish Your Dog for Peeing in the House](#)



[The Posts of the Year 2018](#)



[How to Pet Cats and Dogs](#)



[Puppy Socialization Practices - And How They Are Lacking](#)

About Zazie Todd, PhD



Photo: Jakkrit Orrasri/Shutterstock

Punishing the dog for urinating inside is basically the opposite of house training.

There's also the wider issue that **punishment** is not the best way to train dogs – reward-based training is a better approach.

House soiling accidents are not due to spite

When dogs pee in the house, people often think the dog is being spiteful or stubborn or sneaky. But that's not the case.

It's easy to see how people might think that, because sometimes dogs pick odd spots to pee in. Like the time someone told me their newly adopted dog had peed in his shoes.

Well, who knows really why the dog picked the shoes – perhaps he had been sniffing them and we all know that a lot of sniffing precedes peeing, or perhaps it was because the shoes were right by the door and the dog really wanted to go outside.

I can understand why that would feel personal! Luckily the guy knew that his dog was not fully house trained yet and it wasn't a personal slight, it was just that he needed to house train the dog.

Even if it makes us angry when a dog has an accident inside, we need to stay calm (or try and see the funny side) and not blame the dog.

HANDMADE & VINTAGE ITEMS

Etsy [SHOP NOW](#)

Medical issues could be the cause of house soiling

If your dog is already house trained and they have an accident in the house, it's time to schedule an appointment with your vet.

There are several medical issues that can cause dogs to pee in the house, including urinary tract infections. Diabetes, kidney issues, prostate disease, and other issues can also be the cause. Some medications cause increased urination as a side effect.

If your dog has a medical issue, no amount of training is going to resolve it. That's why you need to see the vet.

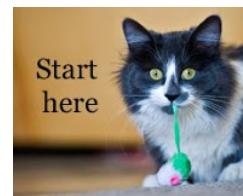
As well, some of these conditions can be very painful. The dog may associate urinating in the usual spots with pain and be looking for new places to pee instead.

Because people often make assumptions about the dog being spiteful, stubborn or sneaky, they may initially not realize there could be a medical cause. But it's important to seek veterinary help sooner rather than later.



& Companion Animal Psychology

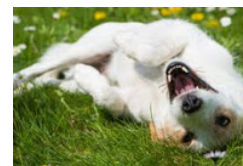
New reader?



Companion Animal Psychology Book Club



I'm a Dog Person!



All about dogs and puppies.

I'm a Cat Person!



All about cats and kittens

Dog Training Research Resources



The Best Pet Blogs to Follow



Search This Blog

Search input field with a search button.

The secret to house training

Puppies, of course, do not arrive fully house-trained, even if the breeder has made a good start on this. As well, dogs acquired from other sources (such as online ads or rescues) will sometimes not have been properly house trained yet.

The secret to good house training is simply to take your puppy or dog outside often, and then reward them for peeing and pooping outside. Although this sounds easy, you will have to keep it up for three weeks without mistakes.



Photo: Grigorita Ko/Shutterstock

You need to take the dog outside often enough that they always empty their bladder outside and don't get chance to go in the house.

It's up to you to stop mistakes from happening by always taking them outside in time. And go outside with them so that when they do go, you are there to reward them right away. (You'll need to make sure you have some [good training treats](#) handy).

Reward the dog as soon as the peeing or pooping is finished.

To help prevent accidents, make sure you always have your shoes, coat and treats to hand. That way you're always ready to take the dog outside.

You will need to supervise your dog closely in the house, which may mean keeping them on a leash or on your lap at times when they might need to go soon.

You may also learn to recognize the signs that your dog needs to go, which means you should take them outside right away.

You may want to crate the dog at times when you are not able to supervise them properly. (Of course, this means you have to crate-train the dog as a priority).

For young puppies you may need to take them outside every half an hour as they cannot hold their bladder very long at that age. You may need to carry them outside so they don't urinate while you're getting your shoes and coat on.

Don't loosen up this management until you've had three weeks without accidents in the house.

Clean up messes properly

If there are any messes in the house, it's important to clean them up properly. Dogs have great noses and the smell may linger for them even if it's not detectable to us.

You can buy ready-made enzyme cleaners from pet stores and supermarkets. Or you can make your own with a 10% solution of a biological washing powder, then rinse the area after cleaning it. Of course, always do a patch test of any cleaner before using it, to be sure your carpet or other floor isn't be damaged.

Blog Archive

▼ 2018 (85)

▼ December (10)

[Fellow Creatures: A New Post](#)

[The Posts of the Year 2018](#)

[Season's Greetings](#)

[Animal Lovers Pick Their Favourite Books of 2018](#)

[Animal Books](#)

[Companion Animal Psychology News December 2018](#)

[Don't Punish Your Dog for Peeing in the House](#)

[Fellow Creatures: A New Post](#)

[Dogs, Cats and Humans: The Best Sleep Partner...?](#)

[Companion Animal Psychology Book Club December 2018...](#)

► November (7)

► October (6)

► September (8)

► August (6)

► July (5)

► June (9)

► May (10)

► April (7)

► March (7)

► February (5)

► January (5)

► 2017 (84)

► 2016 (58)

► 2015 (54)

► 2014 (50)

► 2013 (53)

► 2012 (39)

Copyright Information & Privacy

Copyright of all text is held by the author. Images are also copyright, often to a third party. Do not copy without written permission of the copyright holder. The privacy policy is available [here](#).

Disclaimer

The information in this blog and on the corresponding social media pages does not constitute advice. If you need advice about your pet, consult a veterinarian or a qualified animal behaviourist or dog trainer, as appropriate.



Photo: Miriam Doerr Martin Frommherz/Shutterstock

Availability of water during house training

Sometimes people respond to the dog having accidents in the house by restricting access to water, or taking the water bowl away overnight.

This is not going to solve the problem as you still need to house train the dog or deal with any medical issues.

Water should be available for your pet at all times. (See: [what are the Five Freedoms and what do they mean to you?](#)).

Summary: House training do's and don'ts

The problem with punishing a dog for urinating in the house is that it doesn't help to solve the problem, it may make your dog fearful, and it can even make the problem worse.

If there might be a medical issue, it's important to see a vet first. Only once medical issues are resolved or ruled out can you work on house training.





If it's a house training issue, it's up to you to train your dog by preventing accidents from happening in the first place, rewarding the dog for toileting outside – and keeping this up for three weeks without mistakes.

Understandably this can sometimes be difficult. If you're struggling, consider hiring a dog trainer to help. (See: [how to choose a dog trainer](#)).

If you prefer to watch a webinar, check out [Housetraining 123](#).

How long did it take you to house train your dog?

My Amazon Picks

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
|  <p>Nature's Miracle Stain and Odor Remover Dog, Odor ...</p> |  <p>The Dog's Balls 12 Premium Red Dog Tennis Balls</p> |  <p>Rapid Rewards Deluxe Dog Training Bag with Belt by ...</p> |  <p>Blueberry Pet 2018/2019 New 4 Colors NEP Yarn Wool B...</p> |
|--|--|---|---|

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 10.24 (1773) | 19.99 (362) | 19.99 (425) | 23.99 (640) |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|

All Search Amazon Go

Ads by Amazon

Love Companion Animal Psychology? [Support me on ko-fi](#) or [subscribe to follow by email](#).

As an Amazon Associate I earn from qualifying purchases. As an Etsy associate I earn from qualifying Etsy purchases.

Posted by [Zazie Todd, PhD](#), for [Companion Animal Psychology](#) at [December 12, 2018](#)

Labels: [dogs](#), [house training](#)

11 comments:



Leslie 14 December 2018 at 04:44

What about dogs that do not go outside? My dog goes on potty pads in the house and he sometimes will pee on the rug in front of the pad (80/20 on/off). How do I stop him from doing this?

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)



Translation Services 14 December 2018 at 10:42

Excellent article!

My dog was almost fully house-trained when I adopted her. My housemate and I kept up with the crate training and the rewarding like you have outlined. The few accidents she had were because no one noticed in time that she was lurking by the door wanting to go out, and she was never punished for it - we scolded ourselves for not being vigilant lol.

A year or so later, she started peeing herself inside. I woke up to find she had peed in her sleep on my bed. I was never angry, just very worried. After the vet ruled out any infections, they decided she must have urinary incontinence, likely a side effect from being spayed. She now takes estrogen (Stilbestrol) once-a-week and has had no problems since.

I have noticed one thing I think might be an interesting side effect. When she was a puppy, she would pee multiple times on walks, something I chalked up to her having a tiny bladder. She grew out of this (which would have been around the time I got her spayed) and began only peeing at the beginning of walks. After she began taking the stilbestrol, I noticed that she will still have one good pee at the beginning, but then proceed to stop several more times on our walk to sniff out places to mark a bit (which became even more obvious in the winter when I could see the yellow snow she decided to crouch over). It occurred to me that perhaps that's what she had been doing as a puppy, stopped doing when she was spayed, and then began again now that she is on estrogen?

[Reply](#)



Mo Tanjuaquio 14 December 2018 at 12:36

My dog does excited piddles.

[Reply](#)



EOB 15 December 2018 at 04:02

What about a two-year old dog who the owner has discovered is suddenly peeing in secret places? He's not sure when it is happening. Suggestions?

[Reply](#)



PnP 15 December 2018 at 09:15

How about an older dog that has started (in the past year) marking in the house. Its usually by the chair near the front door (where packages are delivered) or next to a box that may be sitting on the floor. He is 13 and it is driving me crazy. He has a doggy door that is readily available if we aren't home. How do I change this.

[Reply](#)



Dawn Easparro 15 December 2018 at 09:32

I have a super senior, 15.5 y.o. Male. I know you said they dont soil purposely. What do you make of this: if he thinks he is "due" something and if we dont act fast enough (even a minute) he has been coming over to sit next to/on me and urinates!!! Help

[Reply](#)



Lynne Federick 15 December 2018 at 12:38

Great article!

[Reply](#)

Unknown 20 December 2018 at 18:32



I have 2 males that pee competitively, both inside and out...they are my mothers dogs and have done tons of damage...I put diapers on them in the house and they pee in those too...I've had many dogs and never seen such awful filthy behavior...I will never rescue another small dog.

[Reply](#)

Enter your comment...

Comment as: Google Account

[Publish](#)

[Preview](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Companion Animal Psychology...

Companion Animal Psychology is a participant in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, an affiliate advertising program designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to Amazon.com, Amazon.ca and Amazon.co.uk. ([privacy policy](#))

Amazon OneTag

Zazie Todd, PhD. Powered by [Blogger](#).