

# PET TALES

## Doggie do right

By DR. MARTY BECKER and GINA SPADAFORI  
Universal Press Syndicate

Adopting an adult dog from a shelter is a wonderful thing to do. But sometimes people are hesitant to try it because they worry their new pet won't be reliable in the house and can't be made so because of the myth that "old dogs can't learn new tricks."

If you're stalling on adoption or are already struggling with an adult dog who doesn't seem to "get it," take heart: You can teach an adult dog to do his business outside.

Before you start training, though, you must be sure that what you have is a behavior problem and not a physical problem. This is especially true with a dog who has been reliable in the past. You won't be able to train your pet if he's struggling with an illness. So check with your veterinarian first for a complete checkup.

If you've ruled out medical problems, house-training an adult dog uses the same principles as house-training a puppy, except you have to be even more diligent because you need to do some "untraining," too. And a lot of cleaning: You must thoroughly clean any soiled area with enzymatic cleaner (available through pet-supply outlets) to eliminate the smell that invites repeat business.

You'll need to teach your dog what's right before you can correct him for what's wrong. To do this, spend a couple of weeks ensuring that he has nothing but successes

by never giving him the opportunity to make a mistake.

Here's how:

- Leash him to you in the house so you can monitor his every move during his training period. If he starts to mess, tell him "no," take him outside, and give him a command for going ("hurry up," "go potty," etc.). Then praise him for doing right, so he starts to understand what you want.

- Put him in a crate whenever he's not on leash with you. It's not unfair during training to leave him in a crate for four or five hours at a stretch — assuming, of course, that he's getting his regular daily exercise.

- Take him outside first thing in the morning, as soon as you get home from work and just before you go to bed (when you put him in his crate for the night). Always remember to give your "go" command, and praise him when he does as you wish. I find that people never seem shy about punishing their dogs, but too often forget to praise them — they take it for granted that the dog should do the right thing. Never, ever forget the praise!

If you've been consistent, your dog likely will get a good idea of what's expected



Adult dogs can learn to be reliable in the house just as puppies can.

of him within a couple of weeks, and you can start giving him a little freedom. Don't let him have the run of the house yet. Keep his area small, and let him earn the house, room by room, as he proves his understanding of the house rules.

Accidents happen. If you catch him in the act, tell him "no," take him outside, and give him the chance to set things right. Give your "go" command, and praise him if he does. Clean up the mess inside promptly and thoroughly, so he won't feel inclined to refresh his smell there. Don't punish him for any messes you find.

If you aren't catching him, you're not keeping close enough tabs on him. Go back to the crate and leash, and start over.

If you continue to have problems, ask your veterinarian for a referral to a veterinary behaviorist. One-on-one assistance can pinpoint the problems in your training regimen and get you both on the right track. ■

### Pet of the Week



>>Hunter (#421599), a 2-year-old pointer mix, has survived some hard times. He was found living in filthy conditions. (The caretakers have been charged with animal cruelty.) Hunter is learning to trust. Now he needs a loving forever home (as do many other animals confiscated with him).



>>Hope (#421554), a tortoise-colored female, also was rescued from the My Best Friend facility. She's one year old, healthy and affectionate. Like Hunter, she needs a loving home where she can forget the suffering she endured.

### To adopt a pet

During November, active and retired military personnel may adopt pets free of charge at Lee County Animal Services. There are many dogs and cats available at Lee County Animal Services, 5600 Banner Drive, Fort Myers. Call 533-7387 or visit the agency's Web site at [www.leelostpets.com](http://www.leelostpets.com), which is updated throughout the day. Adoption applications may be downloaded from the site or completed at the shelter, which is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Please use the animal's ID number when inquiring about it. Adoption fees for dogs run \$65-\$90. Cats are \$50.

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