

Dog Constantly Potties in House

It's time to go back to square one, and retrain your dog.

By September Morn

Q. My 1-year-old Yorkshire Terrier refuses to be housebroken. She will go out with my other Yorkies, and maybe potty outside once a day. Later in the day she will potty in the house. I have tried letting her out almost every hour, when it is about the time she needs to go, but she does not give me any signals that she has to go. She hides after going, so she does know that I don't like it, but even if she goes outside and gets a treat, she is still going in the house once a day. Is there a way of getting her to change, after a year of trying?

A. It sounds like you put her outside with the other dogs or by herself when you want her to potty. When she's out with the others she might start playing and forget why she's out there. When she's out by herself she might get cold or scared and be unable to relax enough to relieve herself. Either way, you can't be certain she's pottied outside, because you won't see her if she does.

Start accompanying your dog outdoors at potty times. Keep potty outings short and focused -- it's not time for play or walks -- just potty. Take her to the appropriate place and calmly say "Go potty," "Do business," or whatever your term for that is. Give her about five minutes to do what she needs to do. If she doesn't eliminate in that time, she probably doesn't need to. Be quiet and patient and just stand there with her, acting as boring as you can. If she sniffs the ground or actually potties, praise her calmly and quietly, so as not to excite her.

After she eliminates, give her another minute or so before taking her back indoors, in case she isn't quite finished. Some dogs need to potty several times before they're done. If she doesn't potty while you have her outside, take her back inside but keep her with you so you can watch her. Give her another chance in about an hour.

If she's hiding from you after indoor potty accidents, that means she's afraid of how you behave when you find it. Hiding doesn't mean she knows it's wrong, it only means she knows you hate finding it. Punishing for potty errors, even just scolding, seldom helps and often makes matters worse.

You'll need to go back to square one and treat her as you would if she were a new puppy who had just came to live with you. Patiently guide her toward the potty behavior you want her to have, praise her whenever she does the right thing, and watch her like a hawk the rest of the time. When you need a break from watching her, confine her to a pen or a room with an easily cleaned floor and provide an area of potty papers for her to use if she needs to.