

# 6 Steps to House Train an Adopted Adult Dog

By Liz Palika | March 26, 2012



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House training an older dog doesn't have to be difficult. In fact, newly adopted older dogs can be more motivated to learn than young puppies.

Case in point: Snickers is a 4-year-old Pomeranian mix who was owned by an elderly man who passed away. The man's family either didn't want or couldn't take in Snickers, so a rescue group placed him in a new home. In the new home, Snickers' new owners quickly fell in love with him but were startled — and frustrated — by Snickers' poor house-training habits.

Keep in mind that newly adopted adult dogs may be confused in new surroundings and unsure where to relieve themselves. In addition, the dog and his new owners may not yet be communicating well. But be patient and watchful, and you can be successful in house training your new adult dog. We share these six key strategies:

- 1. Freedom is earned; it's not a right.** A dog lacking in house-training skills should not be allowed free run of the house. Instead, he needs restricted access to certain areas of the house where he can be watched and supervised. Use baby gates to close off certain areas — like your carpeted living room.
- 2. Tether the dog using a leash connected to you.** Initially, you can tuck the leash in your pocket or wrap it around your waist. Use this time to teach your dog his new name (if you changed his name), connect with him by talking to him and by praising him, and identify the signals that he needs to eliminate so you can usher him outside.
- 3. Crate train your new dog.** Make the crate fun — give him a treat or chewie while in the crate — but use it to keep him out of trouble and to prevent house-training accidents. During the day, try not to allow him to remain in the crate for more than four hours at a time. When out of the crate, take him outside immediately to relieve himself, and then make sure he gets lots of opportunities to play with you.
- 4. Clean, clean and clean.** If your dog has had accidents in the house, clean those spots thoroughly by using protein enzymatic cleaners made specifically for pet urine and feces. Follow the label instructions and clean completely to prevent your dog from house soiling on the spot again.
- 5. Keep tabs for any possible underlying medical cause.** If your dog is having many accidents or seems to have to go frequently, it may signal a medical condition that warrants a complete physical exam by a veterinarian.
- 6. Teach him bathroom vocabulary.** Take him outside where you wish him to relieve himself. Teach him a word to relieve himself, and always praise him when he does. If you just send your dog outside by himself, you have no idea if he's relieved himself, and you haven't taught him anything. While he is learning house training, be his potty chaperone.