

One thing you may find particularly handy is to teach your dog to stand on command instead of sitting to greet you and receive treats and praise. Virtually every submissive dog tends to squat or roll over to submissively piddle. As an upright stance is contrary to submissive posture, few if any dogs can submissively urinate while standing. Use this to your advantage and have your dog stand rather than sit in situations which might tend to bring out submissive behavior in your dog.

Now that you understand the reasons for your dog's submissive urination, you can go about helping him to overcome and "outgrow" the behavior. Remember that the dog is, after all, trying his best to please you, and his actions are in direct response to your actions. Not only will you be saving your carpet, you will be strengthening your dog's self-confidence and enhancing the relationship between the two of you. Enjoy!

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**Submissive
Urination**

"My puppy piddles when I pick him up. Will he out-grow it?"

"My dog is perfect except for wetting the floor in front of me when I come home from work! How can I make her stop doing that?"

"Our dog rolls over and urinates on himself whenever we punish him for doing something wrong. If we can't make him stop he'll have to live out in the back yard!"

Do any of these comments sound familiar to you? If so, your dog is probably a submissive urinate. Submissive urination has nothing to do with house-training. House-soiling due to incomplete house-training, separation anxiety or dominance marking can occur anywhere in the home and at any time whether the owner is present or not. Submissive urination occurs only in the immediate presence of the owner, and in response to the owner, such as when the owner is greeting, playing with, or punishing the dog. Contrary to what the owner may think, the dog is not being spiteful when submissively urinating. In doggy-lingo the dog is actually trying to appease the owner!

A word of caution: urinary tract infections can cause dogs to urinate inappropriately. Have your veterinarian examine your dog to rule out any contributing physical problems.

While both people and dogs are social animals, our languages are very different. People rely primarily on verbal communication, and we expect our dogs to learn and obey our spoken commands. It is a testament to the adaptive intelligence of dogs that they learn our verbal language as well as they do. However, body posture and scent is the dog's native language. Some dogs are more sensitive than others to the signals their owners inadvertently send them. When they respond in doggy-lingo, owners can be quite confused about what is actually happening. Owners of submissive urinates should especially keep in mind how their actions and postures are perceived.

Puppies are born with a natural response to urinate and defecate when cleaned by their mother. This response is initiated by the puppy being turned over on his back by the mother while she is licking the puppy clean. This physical response naturally evolves into a conscious social behavior where the puppy rolls over on his back and urinates in response to dominate behavior displayed by a dog or human pack member. Looking away, lowering the head and body, and even rolling over to expose the belly, are effective ways for dogs to communicate their acceptance of another dog's authority and avoid confrontation. So why add urine to the picture?

As it so happens, male dogs begin to produce a high amount of the male hormone, testosterone, in their urine as they begin to mature. Females and young male puppies have very low levels of testosterone in their urine. It is thought that the scent of this hormone in a young male's urine alerts a mature dog or pack leader to the presence of an upcoming contender. This stimulates the upper ranking dog to put the young male "in his place", to avoid more dangerous fights later when the challenger might be able to inflict more damage.

Since females and young puppies have extremely low levels of testosterone in their urine, it is to their advantage to add this to their physical displays of submission shown to dominant dogs. When the subordinate dog rolls over and piddles a bit, in effect it is saying "Please smell me and see that I am no threat to your pack position!" This simple ritual keeps pack harmony and reduces unnecessary squabbling and injuries. As puppies grow up, those with more dominant personalities tend to discontinue the addition of urine in their subordinate posturing. Puppies with more submissive personalities may take longer to out-grow it, and occasionally some retain the behavior into adulthood. These dogs need help from their owners to "kick the habit."

Keep in mind that a submissive dog is not a shy or wimpy animal. He or she simply has no desire to be in control, and is eager to accept human leadership. This kind of dog is a willing worker, an excellent pet and companion, and often a good protector of the home. This dog is a good and faithful pack member who does not challenge the owner's authority, and the submissive urination comes from the dog's eagerness to reassure you of that very fact. Now that you know the reasons for your dog's behavior, here are some ways to minimize and prevent your dog from feeling he must continue to reassure you in this manner.

First of all, never "correct" a dog for submissive urination. The dog will just piddle all the more in a vain attempt to appease you and you'll just end up "scaring" the rest of it out of him. Stressing the dog with harsh corrections for submissive urination will make the behavior more deep-rooted and difficult to extinguish. As hard as it may be for you, just ignore the urine, and try to stop the activity that is causing it. Try a one-word correction spoken in a neutral tone of voice for a problem rather than a shouted string of angry words. Better yet, teach the dog some positive commands such as "Sit" or "Down" to counter undesirable behavior like jumping or barking. Make as little fuss as possible, and avoid physical punishments.

Greetings can be very stressful to a submissive dog, even when everyone is happy. When arriving home, try to avoid making a big deal about your return. Avoid bending over a submissive dog, as that is the canine equivalent of dominating posture. Instead, you can kneel down next to the dog so he can greet you on a more equal level. Avoid directly staring at the dog as this can intimidate a submissive dog. Instead, avert your gaze to the side so that you can see what the dog is doing without looking directly at it's face. This will give the dog more self confidence and lessen it's perceived need to appease you.

Some dogs respond best to the owner's return with just a brief acknowledgment, such as a "Hello Fido" and one pat on the head, provided you don't stoop or bend over the dog to give the pat. Anything more can be just too much for them to handle without piddling. With these dogs you should go about your business of putting things away, changing your clothes, and so on, until the excitement of your return has worn off. Then you can give the dog some quiet attention. Some dogs, especially those left inside a number of hours, should be let outside immediately, as you don't want a full bladder to complicate things. Take the dog directly outside without stopping for any greeting. After the dog has done his business outside you might play a non-intimidating game of fetch with the dog. This will allow the dog to work off some of his excitement, and after he has worn off his excess energy and calmed down you may bring him inside with you.

Gentle and non-confrontational obedience training can also boost the confidence of a submissive dog. Find a trainer to show you how to use positive-motivational training methods, such as food or toy rewards. These dogs are very willing to please and usually learn quite quickly what it is you want them to do. Once you teach the dog to obey commands, your dog has outlets other than urinating to appease and please you. It is as if they are thinking "I'm OK, I know what to do right now to make my pack-leader happy with me!"