

# TEACHING YOUR DOG TO RELIEVE HERSELF ON COMMAND

It's a cold, snowy night. There you are all toasty warm in front of the fire watching a good movie when your dog approaches you about going outside. Do you really want to put on your boots, coat, hat, gloves and go for a long walk? That's the last thing you want to do. Teaching your greyhound to relieve herself on command will come in really handy. But how?

To do this, you will have to teach your dog two commands. The first is the "free" word. This tells her that she is free to move about and no longer has to heel on the leash. The second word is your command for the dog to relieve herself, such as "hurry up," "go potty," "piddle," or any word you care to use. Choose one that won't embarrass you if you have to repeat it in public.

When your dog gets it, the sequence should sound something like this: "Rover, free, go potty!" and the dog should proceed to do her business. Finish by saying "good dog!" This should be good for both urination and defecation. In general, you should be asking for something to come out, and the dog will do what's pressing for her at the moment, then the other if needed.

To begin, take your dog outside for her walk, but do not walk her. Do not let her roam all over the sidewalk either. Make her heel next to you on a very short leash. Go to a spot that you want to use for elimination. Tell her "free" and release the leash to a longer leash, and then tell her "go potty" or whatever the word is you've chosen.

Gently lead her head so the "spot" and let her sniff. If she wanders away, say "no" and pull her gently back with the leash to the spot. As you see her get into the position to relieve herself, praise, praise, praise in a happy voice--use a treat if you want to. Only then do you go for the walk, as a reward for her doing what you asked her to do. If she starts sniffing around to go again, say those commands so that it appears that it was your idea, and then praise her again. Go back to the house only when she has gone.

If you follow the instructions but your dog won't relieve herself at "the spot" after about two minutes, then walk further to get her to relieve herself. Basically, you're delaying the actual training while trying to get a lure. When you see her get into position, say the commands again. Then, as she accomplishes what's expected of her, praise, praise, and praise more. Bring a plastic bag to grab some dirt/grass from the spot he just soiled and take it with you. Take the stool or urine-grass and put it on the spot you want her to use in the future (close to your house).

When it's time to go out again, take her to the previously designated "spot," upon which you deposited her stool or urine-grass. Use a short lead and don't let her wander. You're out there for business first, so go directly to the spot. If she sniffs the spot, praise her for doing so and once again give the command (free, go potty). If she will not go on that spot, take her back in the house and crate her (or just leave her alone in an isolated area away from you). Remain calm and don't punish her. This is not a power struggle; you must teach her what is expected of her. Give her 15 minutes in the crate, or alone, and do the exercise again. If she won't go again, go back in the house and into the crate (or alone).

After about 3 or 4 of these episodes, she should go in the spot selected, and when she does, praise up a storm! Then go for the walk or play with her favorite toy...reward her for doing what you've asked her to do.

If she happens to stop to relieve herself while on a walk, make it your idea--give the commands at the right moments. She'll remember the command in a couple of days. -- by Diane Swanson, reprinted from *Skinny Dogs Newsletter*