



Submissive Urination: Why Your Dog Does it, and How to Help Them Stop

Information adapted from original article posted by the Humane Society of the United States

Submissive urination is common and normal in puppies, who will usually outgrow the behavior. But some puppies remain timid into adulthood, and submissive urination can become a problem in the home.

Signs of submissive urination

If your dog pees at the following times, you are probably dealing with submissive urination:

- When they are being scolded
- When a person approaches them
- When they are being greeted
- When there's a disturbance such as a loud argument or sirens blaring
- While making deferential postures, such as crouching, tail tucking, or rolling over and exposing their belly

If your dog urinates when playing or being greeted, but doesn't exhibit submissive postures, s/he may have a different problem: excitement urination.

Why your dog urinates in submission

Dogs who behave this way are usually shy, anxious or timid and some may have a history of being treated harshly or punished inappropriately. A dog who's unclear of the rules and unsure how to behave may be especially insecure. These dogs sometimes urinate and/or display deferential postures to mollify anyone they perceive as threatening and to avoid punishment.

How you can help your dog stop

First, take your dog to a veterinarian to rule out any medical reasons for the behavior.

Then, start building up their confidence with these steps:

- Teach them commands using positive reinforcement training methods.
- Keep their routine and environment as consistent as possible.
- Gradually expose them to new people and new situations and try to ensure that their new experiences are positive and happy.

- Keep greetings low-key (no bear hugs or loud voices, which your dog may perceive as threatening.)
- Encourage and reward confident postures such as sitting or standing.
- Teach alternatives to deferential behaviors. For example, have your dog "sit" or "shake" as you approach, and reward success.
- Avoid other postures that your dog may interpret as threatening or confrontational. Avoid direct eye contact; look at their back or tail instead. Get down on their level by bending at the knees rather than leaning over from the waist. Ask others to approach in the same way. Pet them under the chin rather than the top of their head. Approach them from the side, rather than head on, and/or present the side of your body to them.
- Eliminate odors wherever your dog submissively urinates, especially if they aren't completely house-trained.
- Don't punish or scold them for submissive urination. This will only make the problem worse.
- If your dog is extremely fearful, ask your vet about medications that may help during the retraining process.

Above all, be patient. It will take time for your dog to gain confidence, but with you leading the way, they can overcome their fears and blossom into a happy, secure dog.