



Coprophagia

Help – my dog eats poo!

As disgusting as we might find it, eating poo is actually a normal behaviour for many dogs. Puppies for example, might naturally eat poo as they explore their environment. Don't worry though, if you can't stomach it there are lots of ways to teach your dog to leave poo well alone!

Safety first!

Book a veterinary health check to make sure there isn't a medical reason, such as a dietary deficiency, that might need treatment.

Think about how you react!

- ✎ However revolting you find it, take care not to tell your dog off when they are eating poo because you risk making them worried about you and your relationship with them!

- ✎ For some dogs who enjoy human attention, even being told “No!” means they're getting your interest, so they might then use eating poo as a way to get you to come and interact with them!

- ✎ Similarly, when your dog starts eating poo, take care not to go running to try to stop them, because they might learn to do it in order to get you to run over to them. They might also consider the poo as being very valuable, because it looks as though you're running to get to it before they can, and so you might accidentally encourage them to eat it even more quickly, so they don't have to share it! If they feel that poo is very valuable, they might feel they have to guard it!

Home improvements!

- ✎ If your dog usually eats twice a day, try splitting their daily food allowance into three meals, or more. Smaller meals given more often throughout the day may help to reduce peaks of hunger that might make poo more tempting for them.
- ✎ Make mealtimes more interesting and engaging for them. Use food-releasing puzzle toys to feed them from, or scatter food around the home or garden for them to find.
- ✎ If they toilet in your garden, then interact with them as soon as they've finished and call them inside for a reward so you can then pop outside and clean it up away from their sight. If you rush outside to clean up the poo while they are right there you risk them eating it quickly while you're on the way. Calling them inside for a treat or a game also rewards them for coming away from it too, a very useful lesson!

Stopping your dog from eating poo during walks

- ✎ Keep your dog on lead when there is a chance they might eat poo. This will give you the safe means to help them learn that leaving it alone is a really good idea, because it results in good things happening to them! Always give them a treat for being on the lead so they enjoy being put on lead, and once you're safely past let them go again!
- ✎ Each time your dog acknowledges a poo on the ground, simply use their name to gain their attention. When they look at you – and away from the poo – reward them with really tasty treats or a game with their favourite toy as you lead them away from the poo.



- If they ignore you, don't worry, it just means it's really hard for them and the poo is especially tempting! Stay still and calm, make a 'kissing' sound or use a higher-pitched voice to try to gain their attention. Only if necessary, gently guide them away without any yanking on the lead. As soon as they turn and follow, give them the reward. This will help them to understand what a good decision it was to leave the poo alone, so they'll be more likely to make that choice again next time!

- When they go to the toilet themselves, be prepared to scatter some tasty treats around for them to sniff out so you can pick up their poo while they are busy and without them becoming interested in what you are doing.

- You might also like to try teaching your dog to turn away from something when you ask them to "leave it". This is useful in a variety of situations – whenever there is anything you do not want your dog to have!

Top training tip

Every dog is an individual! Each time your dog ignores a poo reward them with something they really like - a tasty treat, a game or a fuss. They should soon learn that leaving poo alone means something great will definitely happen!

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