

Dear Dr. Wise,

Question: We have a terrible problem with our six-month-old puppy. We love her very much but can't stop her from urinating in the house – on the rugs, porch, and breezeway. She goes outside and plays and goes to the bathroom but still has “accidents” in the house. We've tried rubbing her nose in it. That doesn't help.

Answer: Housebreaking a pup is one of the most important first lessons. It sounds like your puppy has decided to be a little different and cause you some problems.

She is probably holding part of her urine so she can mark her territory in the house. It is not uncommon for dogs to save half the urine in the bladder for this purpose, whether outside or indoors. It is their way of telling other animals that the territory is theirs. It is good that you had her spayed, but apparently this didn't help.

Here are a few suggestions for solving your problem: first, only give her water 15 minutes at feeding time. Her stimulus to eat and drink also will stimulate urine production. After eating, take her for a walk. Take her on long walks, even out of the yard, to get her to urinate repeatedly to empty her bladder. Walks between feedings also will help. Give her a lot of praise, perhaps even a treat, every time she urinates. This positive reinforcement is important.

To break her habit of urinating indoors, you need to control her and keep her close to you. This close proximity will deter her from running away and urinating in the house.

When you leave her alone in the house, confine her. Instinct tells her not to urinate or defecate where she is lying so either leave her in cage or crate or small room. You'll want to continue these practices until you feel she has gotten out of the habit of going to the bathroom in the house. You also should avoid rubbing her nose in the mess and then sending her outside. If you catch her in the act of urinating, it is appropriate to say a stern “no” as negative reinforcement. Then take her outside.

Housebreaking a puppy is not that difficult. It begins the day the puppy arrives home. Exercise her frequently – as often as every two to three hours – in one selected area outdoors. You should exercise her as soon as she awakens from sleep or rest, immediately after meals, just before bedtime and a few times in between. At first, eliminating and being outdoors will be coincidental. With time, it will become a habit. This routine usually trains most dogs in 7 to 10 days. It is also important to use the same door each time you take her out.

If you have a question, write Dr. Wise, Indiana Veterinary Medical Association, 201 S. Capitol Avenue, Suite 405, Indianapolis, IN, 46225, or [www.invma.org](http://www.invma.org).