

HOW TO PREVENT & RESOLVE JUMPING

Dogs jump up for a variety of reasons, so the ultimate solution to the unwanted 'jumping behavior' will vary depending on the dog's motivation. This article will discuss how to address the kind of jumping behavior that is performed by a friendly, exuberant dog who is seeking attention from a human.

Why Dogs Jump for Attention

Puppies learn from a very young age that jumping on people is a great way to get them lots of love and affection. Most humans would never scold a tiny puppy for jumping on them... in fact, many people WANT tiny puppies to solicit attention in that adorable "look at me, pet me please" fashion. As a result, the humans indulge the puppy with endless attention rewards while the puppy jumps all over them. From then on, jumping becomes a go-to behavior for a dog to solicit attention from humans – which can become problematic as that puppy grows into a full-size adult dog.

Four Paws on the Floor

Due to the sheer excitement that often corresponds with a greeting, it is often unreasonable to ask a young dog to 'sit' and expect them to stay seated while they get attention. Instead, I recommend that you help your dog learn to just keep "four on the floor" for pets. As long as your puppy/dog has four paws on the floor, they can (and should) get all the attention you can give them!

Correcting a Dog Who Jumps

In addition to rewarding a dog for keeping four paws on the floor, you can implement 'negative punishment' to reduce the frequency of jumping. The term 'negative punishment' translates to: A dog's undesired behavior makes the good thing go away. Next time your dog jumps on you, turn around, remove eye contact and verbal contact, and stand up if you are seated. By doing this, you are removing all the attention that your dog is seeking, letting them know "jumping makes the good stuff go away".

That said, it is important to realize that your jumping dog is trying to communicate with you and their request might go along the lines of "will you please interact with me?" Rather than ignoring your dog for a prolonged period of time because they jumped, redirect their excitement by asking for a polite behavior and then engage your dog in appropriate way! Perhaps you find a toy, ask for your dog to 'sit' and engage in play; get out some treats and do a bit of training; or take your dog on a walk.

What NOT To Do in Response to Your Dog's Jumping

When your dog jumps DO NOT, I repeat DO NOT look at them and use your hands to gently guide them to the floor while saying 'off'. If you do this, you are teaching your dog that jumping results in you looking at them, touching them and talking to them – WHICH ARE ALL THE THINGS THEY WANT! Teaching a 'down' or 'off' cue in response to jumping is entirely ineffective at teaching your dog not to jump.

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Be Proactive

So many owners unintentionally withhold attention UNTIL their dog solicits it by jumping. They assume that if their dog walks over to them calmly then they must not need anything. That's definitely not true! The next time your dog is within a couple feet of you, offer them attention BEFORE they 'ask for it'. This lets them know that offering calm behavior is an effective way to get attention.

On a more general note: Make sure your dog is getting plenty of exercise (usually 1-3 hours per day for a young, energetic breed). A dog with pent-up energy is going to be much more likely to jump you and on others as compared to a tired dog whose exercise and enrichment needs have been met.

Greeting Guests Upon Arrival to Your Home

This is a special scenario because we can actually anticipate jumping before it happens and therefore PREPARE for it! **You can also apply this technique anytime someone in the household arrives home**

It is normal for a social dog to be very excited about a guest arriving. And in case you didn't know, your dog wants nothing more than to INTERACT with that new guest! Prepare for the interaction by leaving a very special (reserved) toy on the porch for your guest to give to your dog as they enter the home. Better yet, keep a box of special toys on the porch or wherever you or guests enter so it's always ready.

If your dog doesn't like toys, a special chew item like a pig ear, cow hoof, or KONG stuffed with frozen cream cheese is a great alternative to a toy. You can simply give this to your dog when the doorbell rings and let your dog greet your guests at the front door to show off what they got! If the item is as valuable as it should be, your dog should keep a firm hold and eventually go lay down to chew.

Greeting Guests in Public

Scenario: You're on a walk and someone says "Can I please pet your dog?!". How do you respond? You have of two choices:

1. Respond: "Sorry, not today, we are training." Give a big friendly smile, wish them a great day, and continue your walk!
2. Respond: "S/he is in training. Will you please ask him/her to sit and give him/her this treat?" Proceed to hand a treat to the stranger so that they can reward your dog for sitting. Then be on your way.

For dogs over 5 months of age, I highly recommend the first response. It is helpful for your socialized dog to learn how to pass by humans in public without expecting interaction. If your puppy is still in the socialization window (between 8-20 weeks), you can (and should) facilitate appropriate interaction with that stranger using treats or toys low to the ground to prevent jumping.

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Scenarios That Can Cause Ongoing Challenges

Dog Daycare

If your dog attends daycare, they are probably being rewarded for jumping. Why? Because you are not sending your dog to daycare for training. You are sending them to daycare so that they can have the time of their life, romping with other friendly dogs, and getting loved on by awesome daycare staff members. It is the staff's job to make sure your dog is happy and well-loved... which often means your dog gets all the attention they want regardless of where their paws happen to be planted. There is also a lot of competition for doggie attention at daycare, which can enhance the tendency for dogs to jump.

Friends and/or Family Members Who Reward the Jumping

You will inevitably encounter the person who says "I don't mind it if your dog jumps on me" and continues to pet the dog while front paws are on the human. As a result, the dog will continue to jump on that person and there is very little that you can do about it apart from removing the dog (or the person, lol) from the situation.

In summary, dogs who jump to solicit attention from humans have very likely been 'rewarded' for the behavior at some point in their life. Rather than reacting by telling your dog 'no', 'off', or 'down', use negative punishment (take attention away) to teach your dog that jumping doesn't work and then reward your dog for having four paws on the floor.

In particularly exciting situations, like a guest coming over or you getting home from work, redirect your dog proactively to a bone or a toy BEFORE the jumping starts!