



# ATTENTION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

## WHAT IS ATTENTION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR?

**ATTENTION-SEEKING** behavior, also known as “demand behavior” or “pushiness” is probably the most common undesirable behavior that many dogs exhibit. Dogs wanting attention will bark, whine, paw, push, jump, and/or mouth a person to elicit a response. Some cases of attention-seeking behavior are symptomatic of anxiety. Most of the time, however, a dog has learned to repeat these behaviors through constant reinforcement (deliberate and accidental).

### EXAMPLES

A dog leans and pushes against you. Your response is to touch or pet the dog.

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It was funny when the dog was pawing you until you pet them, but now that they're scratching the kids, you want it to stop.

A dog barks at you when you have treats, so you give them one to stop the barking.

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You think it is cute when the puppy tries to climb up your legs. As an adult, the dog jumps on you and you respond by pushing the dog down.

## DEALING WITH ATTENTION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

### DEFERENCE

Teach the dog to defer to you to receive attention. (See Basic Deference Protocol.)

### EXTINCTION

Avoid responding to the attention-seeking behavior. Both positive and negative responses from you permit the dog to control the situation, thereby reinforcing the behavior.

### NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT

Practice passive withdrawal from the situation by leaving and “sloughing” the dog off or by backing up and letting the dog fall off. If the dog acts like a jack-in-the-box and comes back jumping, move further away and refuse to interact until they sit.

### ATTENTION ON YOUR TERMS

Establish a regular schedule of interactions with the dog (minimum 15 minutes twice a day) such as walking, grooming, and obedience exercises, etc.