# Teaching Polite Greetings

Listed are two exercises to help teach your dog to calmly say "hello." Teaching Four on the Floor and Polite Greetings are pretty much the same thing. Each provides exercises for teaching calm greetings.

## Teaching Four on the Floor

Dogs learn by repeating behaviors that work for them. Therefore, in order to make the Four on the Floor behavior work for your dog, you will need to do several things: 1) Teach your dog that keeping all for feet on the floor will bring her rewards, 2) Reward your dog for not jumping up and 3) Ignore her when she does jump up.

In order to teach your dog Four on the Floor so you can begin rewarding her for it, you can use some of the following training games:

- *Doggie Ping Pong:* Here is one training game everyone in your household can play with your dog. Each person stands in opposite ends of a room with treats in hand. Then each person takes a turn calling your dog to him. While your dog is still several feet away, the caller places a few treats on the floor, just in front of the caller's feet. More treats may be placed in front of the caller's feet to continue rewarding your dog for maintaining Four on the Floor. When your dog finishes eating the treats, the next person immediately calls her and repeats the treat-by-the-feet game. Make sure to place the treat when your dog is approaching and while still several feet away to help orient her to keep Four on the Floor. Release your dog from this game, or any time you're reinforcing a behavior with treats, with a signal or word such as "Okay."
- *Meet and Greet:* Rather than having your dog approach you, in this game you approach your dog. Have treat reinforcements ready and approach your dog. Set a treat on the floor when you are one or two steps away from your dog, and continue placing treats on the ground so long as your dog is maintaining Four on the Floor. Over time, advance to approaching and treating from your hand. When treating from your hands, keep both hands low on approach and during treating so your dog's head stays level and doesn't have to rise up to get the treats.

To continue teaching this behavior, have everyone in your household play similar games with your dog on a regular basis. It's important that everyone sends a consistent message to your dog through their actions, because like people, dogs do not learn effectively when they receive mixed messages.

### Set Your Dog up For Success

In your daily greetings with your dog, have treats ready in hand before engaging her. When she approaches you, set the treat on the floor near you, *before* she jumps up. This helps to focus your dog's attention on the floor, and eliminates the automatic jump-on-approach response. Continue placing treats on the floor while your dog maintains Four on the Floor. Have everyone in the household do the same to teach this behavior.

By giving your dog rewards for maintaining Four on the Floor, you can then contrast that reward with the withdrawal of your attention when your dog does jump up. Ignoring your dog when she jumps up now becomes useful information, as your dog compares this *lack* of attention to the attention and rewards she *does receive* when she has Four on the Floor.

### What to do When Your Dog Does Jump

If your dog jumps up during any of the above training games, or during your daily interactions with her, immediately withdraw all your attention, including saying anything or looking at your dog. For example: draw your hands and arms in toward your body (similar to crossing your arms across your chest) and turn your head away from your dog. When she returns to Four on the Floor, you can again give your dog your

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attention by looking at her, but don't give her any treats yet. Avoid rewarding her with food immediately after a jump; instead it's better to think of her returning to Four on the Floor after a jump as a doggie "do-over." You can then "reset" your dog by taking a step backward and reinforcing her at that time for keeping Four on the Floor by placing a treat on the floor *before* she has the chance to jump up again.
A common (and automatic) reaction to a dog's jumping is to say something like "No!" or "No jumping!" however, *any* attention given during jumping will perpetuate the jumping behavior. Attention of *any kind*, positive or negative, rewards your dog for her behavior, so it is best to withdraw all attention when your dog jumps up, and practice giving attention *only* when your dog has Four on the Floor.

### The Finishing Touches

You can work towards helping your dog generalize the Four on the Floor behavior by reinforcing her for keeping Four on the Floor whenever she is near or greeting new people. It may take time for your dog to generalize this behavior. For example, while she may have learned she gains nothing by jumping up on you, she may still try jumping up on other people. Therefore it's important to inform people that you are working on a training plan, and have them practice giving your dog attention only when there are Four on the Floor, and removing their attention when she jumps. This will teach your dog that jumping up *never* works, all the while showing her that the Four on the Floor behavior does.

After your dog has mastered Four on the Floor, you can begin building on this foundation with additional behaviors. One example is to add a "sit" behavior onto the basic behavior of Four on the Floor greeting requirement. You can build the sit into a more stable behavior by giving your dog treats while she's sitting, delivering each treat to her mouth while she maintains the sit position. When you're finished, remember to release her with "Okay," or a release word/signal of your choice.

## Polite Greetings: Sit to Greet

The goal of the exercise is to teach the dog to greet people politely by sitting and to build the ability of the dog to hold the sit position for a longer period with high distractions. For many dogs greetings are very exciting and very rewarding. Some may not be able to handle all the excitement and jump up on guests or strangers when they are being petted. Using the method below, we'll take your dog's excitable behavior and teach them to replace it with a calm behavior, in order to achieve the same goal of saying hi to a new person. Practice this set up with family and friends before using it in the real world. Remember, practice makes perfect!

It is easier to learn Polite Greetings if you have a helper that is able to stay calm and quiet and that your dog knows. Don't start with strangers or children. Also, have your helper move towards you at first so your dog can learn to remain calm. Once your dog is able to learn to remain calm as someone approaches them, then you switch up and have your dog be the one who approaches the helper. See also Teaching Four on the Floor in the Appendix

**Steps**

1. Start a short distance away from the person your dog is greeting. Your dog must be close enough that he wants to greet the person, but far enough away that he is still responding to cues. If your leash has gotten tight, loosen the slack.
2. Have your helper take one step towards you. Wait for your dog to make a good choice (four feet on the floor) and display a calm behavior. Verbally mark the good choice with a "**BINGO**!"
3. A step at a time, have your helper move closer to your dog. Use your verbal marker as the person moves closer to your dog. Treat your dog when it has four feet on the floor.
4. When you're close enough that your helper can pet the dog, again wait for a calm behavior. Verbally mark the calm behavior and allow your helper to calmly pet your dog, say BINGO and

have your helper feed them a treat. If your dog begins to jump up, ask your helper to walk away and try again.

As your dog gets better at greetings you can gradually increase the excitement level of the greeting itself. Start with a calm adult who pets your dog slowly and with a soothing voice, then move on to a higher excited voice, more enthusiastic petting, and so on. Finally, practice with children once your dog is reliable.

**Click points – Use Verbal Marker**

- Four feet on the floor