

How Do I....?

Stop my Dog or Puppy from Jumping on People?



While jumping, wiggly puppies are cute, a full-grown dog hurling himself at your guests is another story all together! There are few issues as embarrassing as having a dog who is constantly jumping on everyone he meets. This can be a bit of a tricky issue to eliminate, but thankfully there are a variety of things you can do to bring your bouncing dog down to earth!

Management

The more a dog practices a behavior, the stronger the behavior becomes and the harder it is to change. Jumping on people is often rewarded, even accidentally, when the person being jumped reacts in any way to the dog.

Talking to or petting is rewarding, but ANY attention can reinforce this behavior, even scolding or pushing.

The first step with ANY unwanted behavior is to immediately take steps to prevent the behavior from being practiced and reinforced. Management refers to the act of adjusting the environment, lifestyle or circumstance so that the dog is physically unable to practice an unwanted behavior. Good management will help weaken the behavior and your training process will be faster! Keep your dog leashed or tethered when around people, use baby gates or a crate to keep your dog separated from guests when they first arrive, let your company settle in before allowing your dog to come and say hi, and keep him leashed to prevent jumping when he does go to greet them. If the constant use of tethers, leashes and baby gates sounds exhausting, don't worry! These are temporarily measures that can be eliminated as the training progresses.

Management means adjusting your dog's environment to prevent the practicing of an unwanted behavior. This is a critical step in eliminating these behaviors!

Training

Now we have adjusted our dog's life to physically prevent unsupervised interactions that would lead to jumping, so it is time to work on training a nice, polite greeting instead! There are many, many, MANY ways to work on this, here we will review some of the most common and most effective methods.

Training Tips!

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Default Sit/Say Please by Sitting

Your dog wants to go outside and stands at the door barking and jumping, if you open the door you have just taught your dog that jumping and barking is the way to ask to go outside and they will bark and jump MORE. If you did not open the door until your dog offered a nice, polite “sit” your dog is learning that calm, polite sitting is the way to ask to go outside! A default behavior is one the dog learns to offer automatically as a way to ask for something he/she wants – INCLUDING attention from people.

Teaching a default sit is easy using life rewards! Life rewards are anything your dog wants from you, and there are a LOT of them: **open the door to go outside to play, clip on the leash to take a walk, feed treats and meals, give chew-toys and Kongs, play with toys, pet and scratch them, let them up on the couch to cuddle and open the door to get in or out of the car** just to name a few!

Begin to ask your dog for a nice sit before you give them these resources, and don't give them what they want until you get the behavior you want! If you ask for a sit and your dog ignores you, turn around and walk away! “Sorry! The door doesn't open when you jump or bark, try again!” Walk back and ask again!

Once you have asked them to “sit” a few times, begin to EXPECT the behavior WITHOUT having to ask. When you get to the door, just wait and look at your dog, if he doesn't offer a nice sit, turn around and walk away, then come back and try again. Most dogs figure the pattern out very quickly and begin to offer an automatic “default” sit whenever they want something! This teaches your dog that a nice calm sit gets them what they want and you have a dog who “says please by sitting!” For dog's who jump on people, make sure that a default sit is required for ANY attention to be given, from you or from others.

Begin by asking your dog to “sit” before giving any “life reward” such as opening a door, putting on the leash for a walk, or giving a toy. If your dog does not sit he/she does not get what he/she wants!



Teach your dog to offer a default sit to ask to play tug or fetch!

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To further condition the default sit as a way to elicit attention from people, practice the “no jumping zone” game. Tether your dog or have someone stand on the leash as an anchor. Walk up to your dog, if he/she jumps, turn around immediately and walk away, repeat this until the dog sits, then give a treat and/or some affection. If your dog is good at not jumping on you, practice this with other people – family members and friends, guests coming to visit and anyone else you can think of! The more you practice the stronger the default sit will become!

Four on the Floor

ALL attention, affection and rewards are given only when the dogs four paws are on the floor! Any jumping behavior is ignored and not rewarded and as a result will fade. For example, your dog sits nicely and you begin to pet him, while doing so he becomes excited and starts jumping up, you should immediately stand up and withdraw attention until the jumping stops. The dog begins to learn that jumping doesn't work, but calm behavior with all four paws on the floor always works!

ANY attention, including eye contact, scolding or pushing a jumping dog counts as giving attention! To ignore your dog properly, stand up tall, cross your arms, stare at the ceiling and if needed, turn your back to your dog.

Did you know there is a right and wrong way to “ignore” a behavior?? ANY interaction can be rewarding to your dog. Owners often think they are ignoring the jumping, but they are maintaining eye contact, or using their hands to push the dog off them – eye contact and physical contact are both very engaging to dogs and will actually encourage the behavior! Don't believe me? Try this at home: when your dog is lying down across the room, make sustained eye contact and smile, most dogs will come over to see you, invited by your eyes! To ignore your dog properly, stand up tall, cross your arms, look up at the ceiling and say NOTHING, if you need to, turn around and stand with your back to your dog. Do not interact with your dog, and the jumping will stop much faster! Help your friends,

family and others properly ignore your dog when he jumps on them.

Mat Training

Another great method for controlling jumping is to teach your dog to lie down and stay on a mat or bed. A dog that is lying down on his bed is NOT jumping on your guests! Teach your dog to lie and stay on a mat or bed on cue is also easy!



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- Pick up your “mat” (yoga mat, towel, blanket, dog bed, bath towel) and place it down on the floor. Many dogs are curious and will step onto the mat to investigate. If your dog does, tell them “yes! Good job” and feed a treat or two. Pick the mat up and repeat this a few times to get your dog readily stepping onto the mat.
- If your dog doesn’t automatically stand on the mat, no problem, simply lure them onto the mat with a treat and once they are standing on it tell them “yes!” and feed a few treats.
- Next, point to or lure your dog onto the mat and don’t say yes until he sits. Repeat a few times.
- After rewarding for a few sits, withhold the reward and wait to see if your dog will offer a “down”. If he does – heap praise and treats on him! If not, lure him into a down with a treat, saying “yes” and feeding the treat once he is lying down. After a few repetitions, stop luring and see if he offers it.
- Now your dog is automatically going to the mat and lying down when you point to it! All we have to do is add the “stay.”
- With your dog in a down on the mat, cue him to “stay” reward him periodically with treats. After he has stayed for a few moments **RELEASE** him off the mat by saying “ok!”, turning and walking away. This is important as the dog will learn to stay on the mat until he is released.
- Finally, add more time before releasing him. Build up to spending several minutes on the mat with periodic rewards.



Teach an Alternative Behavior

Another helpful option is to teach your dog an “alternative behavior.” This means teaching the dog to do a behavior that will prevent jumping. For example, a dog that is sitting nicely is not able to jump on people at the same time. For dogs who love toys, bringing a toy to a guest to throw or tug can be very helpful, as a dog playing fetch is NOT jumping on people! Keep a supply of easy toys such as tennis balls on hand and either give them to your guests or, better yet, give it to your dog and encourage them to give it to the guest. This can also serve as a temporary management tool while you are training a more permanent solution.

Easy tricks can serve as alternative behaviors too – for example a hand target (dog bumps a guests hand with his nose) or even a “shake paw” trick can encourage polite greetings. Pick the trick you want to use, teach it thoroughly if your dog does not already know it, and begin using it when introducing your dog to people!