

Teach your Dog Not to Jump

By Wendy Van Kerkhove – Fresh Air Training
www.freshairtraining.com

Do friends and relatives cringe and take cover when they see your dog bounding towards them? Have you gotten dirty looks from strangers who are sporting your dog's paw prints on their shirts and pants? If so, it's time to acknowledge that you've got a problem and Fido needs to learn how to properly greet people.

Dogs jump up when they are excited and want to greet someone. A normal part of greeting behavior is to lick the face of the other dog or person. Since dogs are shorter than people, the only reasonable way to get there is by jumping. Jumping up is not a sign that your dog is dominant or trying to "take control." All he knows is that his tongue is down there and your face is up there.

In the past, techniques such as the knee-to-the-chest or grabbing the dog's front paws and not letting go have been recommended to stop dogs from jumping on people. Such methods are not readily recommended as they involve giving the dog a painful or uncomfortable consequence. Many dogs have also been known to misinterpret a knee to the chest as a "fun" game or they simply just don't care about being kneed. If you've repeatedly tried a technique and it has not worked, it's plainly not going to and it's time to try another approach.

Most professionals today use training methods that don't inflict pain or cause physical discomfort to the dogs. Training has come a long way over the past 20 years and clever trainers have developed techniques to teach proper behaviors without using adverse techniques.

Dogs learn through consequences. They repeat behaviors that result in positive outcomes and stop behaviors that have negative ones. The key is to determine what your dog values and use

that as a positive reinforcement for good behavior. A ball may mean sheer bliss to a border collie but simply be a stupid round thing to a St. Bernard.

Dogs are social animals, so getting attention is very important to them. Using your affections as a reward is a very effective training technique. For example, if your dog controls himself and doesn't jump up, shower him with affection. However, if he blows it and jumps, simply walk away and withhold your attention.

Practice Makes Perfect

Before your houseguests arrive, tether your dog with a six-foot leash to the couch or any other immovable object. Ask each guest to approach your dog in a calm manner starting from about ten feet away. If your dog's feet remain on the ground when the person reaches your dog (sitting or standing is fine), the dog's reward is to receive calm petting and praise. If the dog jumps, instruct your guest to say, "Too Bad!" turn and walk away. After about 15 seconds return and repeat the process. It's more effective to get out of the dog's sight when you walk away. It may take many attempts and practice sessions before the dog learns to keep all four feet on the floor, so don't get discouraged.

If your guests are unwilling or unable to engage in the practice sessions, simply keep your dog tethered until everyone has settled or keep him on a tight leash to prevent him from jumping. For the noncompliant guests who insist on allowing your dog to greet with paws up, roll up a newspaper and slap them on the head.

Once your dog has mastered this exercise, it's time to make the situation more difficult. Increase the distance of your approach and act excited to see him as you get closer. At first, your dog will fall apart and jump, but then he'll learn that the same rules apply even when you're squealing and acting like a nut. Once you and your guests can approach your dog from about fifteen feet in an excited manner without him jumping up, try varying your practice

sessions in different locations. If possible, bring your dog to a friend's home or make trips to stores that allow dogs and ask the employees to help participate.

Teaching your dog not to jump doesn't take a high level of training skills. What it does require is a lot of training sessions with consistent and appropriate consequences.

Wendy van Kerkhove owns Fresh Air Training and is an editorial advisory board member for Star Tribune Pet Central. www.freshairtraining.com

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