

Jumping on People



Excited, non-aggressive jumping is what we are talking about in this handout. Puppies naturally jump up on people as a way of saying hello when they are excited. Our dog probably wants to get close to our face. We may have inadvertently reinforced this behaviour by greeting the dog—even by saying "No!" and pushing her away. She won't care what we say or do as long as we pay attention!

1. MANAGEMENT - Prevent rehearsal of the behaviour

If she is liable to jump up on visitors, put her away in another room or in a crate with a yummy stuffed frozen Kong or other favourite food-dispensing toy **before** you open the door.



As you see your dog approaching, and you suspect that she may jump on you, quickly drop a handful of treats* on the floor in front of her WELL BEFORE she jumps, and immediately get down to her level so there is no need for her to jump up to see you. Speak to her in a low, soft voice.

Also consider that giving your dog more exercise will help release some of that excitement and jumping energy.

2. IDENTIFY AND REMOVE THE REWARD THAT DRIVES THE BEHAVIOUR

This ONLY applies when management fails, because it is very difficult to teach the dog not to jump up by only doing this step. But, when management fails and the dog does jump up: Say and do nothing in response to the jumping. Just go about your normal business. Do not respond in any way, as any reaction on your part may function on your dog's brain as a reward. "If dog jumps, dog does not exist."

If you rely too heavily on this step, the jumping may get worse before it gets better. That is a normal response, known as an "extinction burst" and it means that what you are doing is actually working, albeit slowly. You MUST wait her out. If you give in to escalated jumping and react to it, you will only teach her to try harder, to escalate. Ignoring a jumping dog is difficult, but necessary! Do not rely too heavily on this step. Concentrate on #1 and #3.

3. TEACH AN INCOMPATIBLE BEHAVIOUR – THE MOST IMPORTANT PART!!!

Until now, we have discussed trying to discourage the dog from jumping up by avoiding putting her in those situations in which she jumps up, and by removing the reward (our attention) if our management fails and she does jump up. We have not yet taught her what we want her to do instead. That is the CRITICAL step:

We need to teach a solid, volunteered sit. We do this by rewarding EVERY sit that she offers, on her own, without us asking for it, ALL THROUGH THE DAY. We need to build up a solid reinforcement history for volunteered sits so that our dog learns to take responsibility for her own actions and we don't have to manage her behaviour all the time and in every situation. *(This means not 10 or 20 sits/day, but up to, or even over, 100!)*

Expect to have to continue rewarding volunteered sits for a LONG TIME. How long depends on how much and for how long she has been rewarded for jumping up in the past. Continue rewarding sitting until your dog's reinforcement history for sitting has grown larger than her reinforcement history for jumping up. You will see when that starts to happen, because she will begin to offer sits in more and more different situations when she wants attention. Continue rewarding that: give her your full and undivided attention, as well as other rewards, like treats, part of her dinner, a toy, a game of tug, etc – whatever she wants!

Guests are often the target of a dog's jumping. In our [Pet Manners class](#) and in our [Reactive Dog Programme](#), dogs learn to go and lie on a mat or dog bed and we can teach her to do that instead of running to the door and to jump on and bark at visitors. However, desensitization and counter-conditioning to door reactions is a very necessary initial step to achieve this (see: [Door Reactions](#) (pdf)). We also work on this in our [Barking & Jumping Up class](#). Your dog can also learn to sit beside you politely while you are greeting another person. These behaviours are built up gradually through the training programme, through positive reinforcement training, teaching the dog to make the correct choice on her own, without us having to manage her all the time, and without using punishment or other aversives.

*) You are always wearing food on your person, right? 😊

