TRAINING YOUR PUPPY: JUMPING UP

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Q. How do I stop my puppy from jumping up on me?

A. Jumping up on people is normal canine behavior. The primary reason puppies and dogs jump up is to receive attention while greeting humans. We reinforce the behavior by petting, praising, yelling, or using our hands to push them away. If consistently used, there are several friendly methods to stop your pup or dog from jumping up that are effective. See which one works best for your dog.

If your dog shows any signs of aggression such as growling, snarling, biting, etc. please contact a behavior counselor.

Practice no-jumping with different people and in different locations. First, family members should practice in a quiet setting and then ask friends to help them practice. Do not use a choke or pinch collar for any of these exercises. Use a Gentle Leader®, Premier Collar®, or a flat collar.

No Jumping: Dog Tested Solutions:

1. The best method to prevent many unwanted behaviors is to teach and reinforce a behavior that is incompatible with the unwanted behavior. Teach your dog to sit for the greeting. It’s impossible for your dog to sit and jump at the same time! Once your pup learns to sit on command, have her sit when you or friends approach. Always use praise to reinforce the wanted behavior.

2. Teaching your dog to sit for greetings may be challenging. Many dogs know how to sit on command but will ignore the command when the distractions of your homecoming or new guests are added into the scene. Here’s a proven method for dealing with confirmed jumpers. When your dog is approaching you, throw a food treat over her head and away from you so that she has to turn around to get it. If you consistently do this she will learn that the treats start flying in the area a few feet or so out from you. Soon she will stop her approach a couple of feet away and start looking on the ground for treats or better yet, she will start looking at you for a treat when she is a few feet away. This method works very well for dogs that are clicker trained. You click right before she picks up the treat and she will learn that remaining a few feet away is a good strategy for getting treats. Next you can start shaping her to sit upon greeting by clicking and throwing food only when she is standing a few feet away, then when she is sitting a few feet away.

3. Discontinue any games that require your dog or pup to jump up to get a toy, especially games that encourage jumping up to get an item dangled from your hand.

4. If you have a small dog or young puppy that is jumping up, pretend that your pup does not exist until all four paws are on the floor (4-floor). The very instant she has 4-floor, say “good” and give her a treat.
No Jumping: Dog Tested Solutions - Continued:

5. Any instance of successful jumping will increase the jumping behavior now and in the future. If your dog has not yet learned to sit (or stand a few feet away) for greetings, manage the behavior by prevention. If you are at home, place a lead on your dog before guests arrive or keep a short light lead attached to your dog’s flat collar when you are home and supervising her. Step on the lead before your dog jumps up in order to prevent the behavior. Say “oops” when your dog jumps up and immediately say good or click and treat when she has 4-floor. Soon you can just say “oops” to interrupt the jumping behavior. If necessary, place your dog in the crate or in another room before guests arrive. Prevent and interrupt jumping behavior when you approach others during walks. Do not allow your dog to approach other people if you cannot interrupt or prevent the jumping behavior.

TROUBLESHOOTING:

- Use food treats to reinforce 4-floor while you are teaching your dog no-jumping. After she learns how to greet people, your attention and an occasional treat will strengthen the 4-floor behavior.

- Extinction (ignoring the pup unless she has 4-floor) is the best method to use for young, small puppies. Consistency is the key to using extinction for this exercise. Unless all family members and friends always ignore the jumping puppy, she will learn to be persistent with her jumping behavior.

- Because dogs will try harder before they decide that jumping is not the best method to get attention, extinction is not recommended for medium or large dogs.

- Unfortunately small, cute, young puppies are encouraged to jump up by everyone who greets them. Try asking your family and guests to fold their arms across their chests whenever they greet your puppy. They can unfold their arms and greet your adorable pup when she has 4-floor.

- One reason puppies jump up is to greet your face. If you are able, kneel down to greet your very young puppy. If she still jumps up on you, fold your arms and be quiet. Praise her when she has 4-floor.

- Jumping behavior is influenced by whatever precedes her behavior (antecedent) and the result of her behavior (consequence).

- Determine the antecedent. What happens immediately before she jumps up? Maybe your body language is enticing your pup to jump up. Greetings with raised arms and an excited voice often trigger jumping behavior. Are you carrying groceries or anything your dog will jump up to investigate? A calm approach with arms folded and less motion is better than an excited approach.

- Determine the consequence. What happens immediately after she jumps up? Perhaps you are reinforcing the behavior with your actions. Shouting, pushing, praising, petting, and striking are all methods which actually reinforce the jumping behavior because your pup is receiving attention. When discussing attention-seeking behavior, the removal of your attention is a far more powerful tool than using corrections!

- Remember how your dog learns? She learns by trial and error and by repetition. She repeats all behaviors that serve to achieve her goal and she discontinues behaviors that do not serve to achieve her goal. It’s all about her! If she jumps up and every single time people ignore her, she will quickly learn that jumping up is not a good strategy for gaining attention and she will abandon that strategy. If she stands or sits for her greeting and every single time people offer her attention, she will learn that 4-floor is a good strategy for gaining attention and she will increase that strategy.

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