

Jumping

Many dogs jump up on their owners or others as a submissive greeting or appeasement gesture. It is a natural, yet unacceptable, way in which the dogs say hello. At the very least, jumping is a nuisance and at worst, can be harmful, especially to children and the elderly. Unfortunately, you cannot just tell a dog to stop jumping - they do not know what you mean, only that jumping is gratifying - it expresses their pleasure, dispels pent-up energy, and always gets the jumpee's attention. The following is a description of steps for eradicating jumping from your dog or puppy's repertoire. Teaching a dog takes consistency and practice.

There are two components to eliminating jumping: training and management. Management prevents the dog from jumping, a self-rewarding behaviour. Training builds on management and involves withdrawing the reward or consequence (you) when your dog starts to jump and providing a reward (you and your attention) when your dog is not jumping. Always think in terms of behaviour and consequence.

Strategies for Specific Situations

Arriving home, repeated re-entry, greeting guests and greeting passers-by.

Training: When you come home and your dog jumps on you, immediately leave your dog for a time out (walk away and close the door). Wait 30 seconds to 1 minute, then, walk back in to calmly greet your dog. The moment your dog jumps, walk away again and close the door. Keep doing this until your dog no longer jumps, at which point you can reward him by not leaving, petting him and a treat. Try a less subdued greeting with your dog and use the same approach. You can also keep treats with you or outside the door and reward your dog when he is not jumping.

When letting your dog or puppy into the house, apply the same strategy. If your puppy jumps up at the door as you open it, close the door wait a few moments and repeat, asking for a sit before opening the door. Once your dog remains in the sitting position, reward him by inviting him inside. Use the same doorway strategy when letting your dog outside.

When greeting people ask you puppy or dog to sit and stay beside you. As the guest approaches reinforce the stay by rewarding your dog. If he breaks and jumps toward the guest walk away with your dog then return and repeat until he sits. Alternatively have your guests walk away until your dog can sit without jumping up whilst they approach.

Getting puppy's leash to go for a walk

Training: When the puppy starts to jump, back away from the leash. When the puppy stops, walk toward the leash. Repeat with each step of the process of putting puppy on a leash to go outside.

General Strategies

Counter-command: It is much easier to teach your dog to do something (e.g. sit) than to teach him not to do something (jump). Teach your dog a behaviour that is incompatible with jumping such as a high-distraction sit/stay (a down is probably too difficult for most excited puppies) or go find a toy. Have your dog perform an incompatible behaviour before she's inclined to jump (otherwise the natural sequence may become jump, sit, treat). Some dogs will be too excited for a sit, in which case you can teach "go find a toy" or simply reward four on floor. The idea is that the reinforcement value of performing the alternative behaviour (make it worth 100K to the dog through praise, treats, affection) is much stronger than the enforcement value of jumping.

Reward: Reward the dog when he is not jumping (four on floor, being calm, sitting) with treats, praise, petting, games, or a walk. Rewarding NOT jumping will increase the likelihood that your dog will not jump. You can also reward your dog during the day anytime he is not jumping or engaging in other inappropriate behaviour (opportunistic rewarding).

Be consistent: The rule for jumping should apply for all situations and all people.

Fresh Air: If your dog starts to jump, quickly back away so your dog jumps into the air. Once your dog has put his paws on you, it's too late, the behaviour is reinforced.

Provide ample exercise and mental stimulation: Make sure your dog has plenty of exercise. A tired dog is a well-behaved one. Most adult dogs need 30 minutes of aerobic exercise a day.

What No To Do

Avoid inadvertently rewarding your dog for jumping: Petting your dog or having strangers pet your dog when he jumps reinforces the behaviour and should be avoided.

Do not say off or down: This giving attention to the jumping increasing the likelihood of it being repeated. Also you are giving your dog attention for jumping. For some dogs, screeching and attempting to reprimand the behaviour equals attention and will only serve to increase the likelihood of the behaviour.

Do not punish: Jumping is a submissive appeasement gesture. Punishing the dog may only make your dog more eager to appease and jump even more.