

MY DOG KEEPS JUMPING UP!

The information is intended as a general guide only

Jumping up on people is a very common, natural dog behaviour that most people find difficult to prevent.

Why do dogs jump?

Before you can manage the behaviour it is important to understand why jumping is a natural behaviour for your dog.

Puppies lick the mouths and faces of their mothers, and other adult dogs, as an appeasement. They are indicating that they are babies and are no threat to the older animals.

Puppies transfer this behaviour to their human companions but as we are much taller the dogs need to jump up to try to reach our faces.

Most people can't resist a cute and cuddly puppy and allow them to crawl up on them. We reach down to pat him when he paws at our shins or lift him up to our level to cuddle him. This of course reinforces the puppy and he assumes that climbing on his human companions is okay. Once he becomes bigger this same behaviour, that we have told him is okay as a puppy, causes problems for the owner.

The puppy has been rewarded for this jumping behaviour so he continues to do it as he gets older. In the dog's mind he is getting rewarded with attention and is appeasing his human family.

Why you shouldn't use punishment for jumping

Punishments such as stepping on the dog's toes, yelling at him, and smacking him, although intended to dissuade him, usually causes him to jump more. He thinks you are annoyed or frustrated with him and therefore tries harder to appease you, by jumping in an attempt to lick your face.

As a social animal dogs see even negative attention better than no attention.

Physical punishment can create other behavioural problems as the dog doesn't ' may misread your intentions .

What should you do?

With all undesirable behaviour, it is better to reward the dog for a different desirable. Behaviour that makes it impossible for the dog to continue the unwanted one.

In the case of jumping, rewarding "four feet on the floor" will make it more desirable for the dog not to jump. Having his feet on the floor gets him the attention he needs and jumping gets him no attention.

It is best to use simple, non-threatening methods to deter the dog from jumping.

These methods give the dog attention on your terms rather than his and fulfill his need for social contact. You need to set the dog up to succeed and make sure whenever possible jumping is not rewarded either intentionally or unintentionally.

Some ideas to assist you with your jumping dog

Remember that all members of the family must be involved and consistent with the “no jump” training. If the dog is allowed to jump on some members of the family it will undo all the good work of the others.

- Turn and ignore
- Reward “four on the floor”
- Teach the dog an alternative behaviour

Turn and ignore

The simplest way to let the dog know that jumping is not a behaviour you want, is to ignore him when he jumps. Any reaction from you will be seen by the dog as attention and rewarding.

Don't speak or look at the dog, fold your arms and turn away. The dog will learn pretty quickly that jumping gets him no attention. Once he has settled and is sitting or standing with all four feet on the floor you must reward him.

When rewarding him it must follow quickly after he has done the desired behaviour so he knows that feet on the floor is a good behaviour. Make sure you praise him calmly and feed him a treat. Bend down to reward him so you do not encourage him to jump up to get the food.

If the dog jumps on visitors you may need to keep him on a lead when they arrive, until he has been rewarded enough to understand that keeping his feet on the floor is much more rewarding than jumping. The lead is NOT to jerk the dog away from visitors it is just to contain him until he understands that visitors as well as the family cannot be jumped on.

Explain to your visitors that you are training the dog to be polite around visitors and enlist their help. Ask them not to speak to the dog until you have the dog's feet on the floor, and rewarded him. Ask them to approach quietly and calmly praise the dog for being good.

Visitors are very exciting so it will take the dog some time to understand that he will only be able to interact with them if he keeps his feet on the floor. Make sure that he knows you have a very tasty treat when visitors arrive so he is more likely to want to behave as you wish.

If the dog is a small puppy it is better to get down to his level when patting him so he does not have to jump up on you to get attention.

Teach an alternate behaviour

Teaching your dog to “sit” will also assist in reducing jumping - very hard for the dog to jump when his butt is on the ground. Sit should be taught as a separate behaviour and can then be incorporated into the “no jump” training.

Remember - Jumping is rewarding for the dog as he is looking for your attention, you must therefore reward strongly for not jumping.

The more you train your dog and interact with him in an appropriate way the easier it is to be able to change undesirable behaviour to desirable behaviour.