

Jumping Up (or... How to Properly Greet People!)

Remember that it is natural for the dog to want to lick our faces as proper greeting behavior & as a way of showing respect. So getting mad at the dog for jumping up will only make it worse as he will work harder to show his submission to you!

A large part of the reward for the dog when jumping up is the attention he receives from the person. Just about ANY reaction (shoving, yelling, pushing, etc.) is attention and therefore reinforcing. It is best to ignore the behavior as much as possible - make it STOP WORKING as an attention getter!

Also, realize that the excitement of the greeting is what sets off many dogs. So, do your best to keep your greeting behavior as low key & quiet as possible! Consider ignoring your dog when you first enter the house (unless he's in urgent need of a potty break, of course). Greet any other human family members first, and ignore the frantic, jumping dog until he settles down. Even then, keep your greeting calm.

IT MAY GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER! I like to use an analogy here. Say there's a soda machine that you use everyday, dropping in your quarters & getting your drink. Then, one day, you push the button and nothing happens. Do you walk away? I think not... you'll probably push the button again, then punch it, then perhaps even shake the machine (not wise, of course!) You do these things because pushing the button WORKS, and pushing it harder often works as well. So, for many dogs, jumping up on you currently works, in that it gets them attention. Please understand that yelling at them, kneeing them, etc., counts as attention and is actually reinforcing to the dog. You need to be the soda machine that truly doesn't work any more. If you stand firm, and don't give in, your dog will eventually stop trying. You can help him along by rewarding him with treats when he chooses NOT to jump. For many dogs, it's easier to hold still for a treat; if you try to reward the non-jumping with petting they get all excited and jump again! Eventually, of course, you'll be able to dispense with the treats, but they are very helpful in the training stage.

You will likely find that you can make a lot of progress teaching your dog not to jump on members of your family, but that greeting visitors is much more of a challenge. The advice below should be helpful for that:

1. First, until your dog is reliably sitting or standing when greeting people, tell everyone to just turn aside when he jumps up, and then to walk away. They must be sure to give the dog NO ATTENTION for that behavior any more.
2. Have as many people as you can help out by coming in the door to greet him (with treats if you like).
3. You should kneel on the floor next to him at first, helping him to hold his sit (or stand).
4. The people (coming in only one at a time) should quietly greet him, and gently pet/give treats as long as he remains sitting. If he jumps up, then they should turn away, ignoring him until you let them know that he has all four paws back on the ground & has settled. Having the people crouch to quietly greet him will help a lot!
5. The more people you can get to help, and the more times you can practice it, the better. You want your dog to learn that jumping up no longer works to get attention. Rather, keeping his paws on the ground now does work!
6. The key to all this is really consistency. If sometimes the dog jumps up & is allowed then he will learn that is okay to do so and will only be confused. Remember, ANY response other than ignoring him is attention, which is reinforcing even if negative. The hard part is usually getting all family members to play along.

7. When you have company over with whom you really can't work on this, then do not let them in until you have the dog under control. Either on leash (and you have some treats to reinforce him for not jumping) or simply outside or in his crate with a pig ear or juicy bone. As with everything else, if you allow the behavior to happen (for whatever reason), then you are actually teaching him that it's acceptable. So, if you can't train, then do what you have to do to avoid the situation.

Good luck!

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*using positive methods to teach people how to teach their pets!

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