



Dealing with Jumping

The first question we have to ask ourselves is WHY is our dog jumping. What does our dog want out of the interaction? If your dog is still jumping when you feel like you are discouraging the behavior, chances are you are inadvertently giving them what they want out of the interaction. Most dogs jump because they want attention.

So when we react to their jump by shouting “off!” or “no!” or pushing them off, we are:

1. Looking at them
2. Talking to them
3. Touching them

All of these things are reinforcing to our dog because we are giving them the attention they are asking for. It doesn't matter if you are saying it angrily or pushing them in a way you think is uncomfortable for them, attention is attention. Therefore, in their mind, the jumping works, and they will continue to do it again and again in the future to get their desired reaction from us.

To fix this undesirable interaction, two things have to happen:

1. We must stop the reinforcement for the undesired behavior
2. We must replace the behavior with something else. For example, it is impossible for our dogs to jump on us if they are instead sitting or laying down.

So the first thing to do is to remove the reinforcement. Instead of touching or speaking to your dog, immediately withdraw attention (as if that was the rudest thing they could have done).

The second, is to teach an alternative, incompatible behavior. The following six exercises will help us practice this.

1. FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE FLOOR DURING APPROACH

Treat to the floor as a person approaches your dog. This encourages your dog to keep his paws on the floor, and his focus keeps moving to the floor, rather than up at the person's face. Practice that as the person approaches, and when the dog settles enough, the person can say hello, and you can tell your dog to “Go See” them. But remember, if they start jumping up once the person is saying hello, the interaction must stop. Simply move them a few steps away, don't reprimand or yank them down.

2. GREETING BEHAVIOR - GO SEE

Use "Go See!" to let your dog know that it's okay to go check out that person as they approach. Once they get close enough to sniff, call your dog back to you for a treat, and then release him again to Go See. Let him get close enough for a smell of the person, but not close enough to jump up on them.

3. PERCH FOR GREETING

Teach your dog to step up on something that is slightly raised off of the ground and has limited surface area. This serves as a visual guide for your dog to keep their feet in place. A textbook, a brick, a stepping stool, or an overturned feed dish all work. Practice first by having the person approach and stop at a distance, then come up and talk with you while ignoring the dog, then greeting the dog. If the dog leaves the perch, the person retreats.

4. SIT FOR PETTING

An alternative behavior is to teach that when the dog has his bum on the floor, that's when people will approach. Use a safety measure like stepping on the leash to limit your dog's ability to reach paws up onto someone small or frail. It's a little cheat that helps them out and can prevent accidentally toppling the person with any over-exuberant greeting.

5. AUTOMATIC SITS

Practice cueing your dog for a sit before they have a chance to do anything else. Call your dog over to you. As soon as they are about a body length away from you, cue a sit. If they sit, mark and reward. Move to a different spot and repeat. If your dog jumps, move to a different spot without rewarding and try again. Don't say anything other than the sit cue. Once you have practiced this behavior many times, stop giving the verbal cue for sit. When you stop, if your dog sits, they get a treat. If they don't sit, or they jump, move on to a new spot and try again.

6. MULTI-CUE SITS

We never know how someone is going to react when our dog jumps on them. They may fling their arms up (a very exciting action for our dog) or wave their hands (even more exciting!). Instead of having these actions ramp up our dog's excitement even more, we can turn those arm movements into additional cues for our dogs to sit. Your verbal cue for sit will supercede any extraneous arm movements because all of the arm movements are additional cues for the sit!