



Jumping on visitors

HALL VETERINARY SURGERY BEHAVIOUR ADVICE



Never reward a dog that jumps up on people by giving them the attention they are seeking. Rewarded behavior is reinforced behavior, meaning it will become more common.

WHY DOES YOUR DOG JUMP UP? A dog leaping up to get closer to your face is simply saying 'hello' and looking for attention. Chances are you pushed the dog off, giving it body contact, which they love in any form. Even if you say 'no' or 'bah', your dog hasn't learnt to speak English so doesn't understand you want him to stop. *The reinforcers of eye contact, physical contact and your voice are powerful enough to make the dog repeat the undesirable behaviour. And no, a knee in the chest won't work either and is kind of mean!*

DON'T INCREASE THE EXCITEMENT

One of the lovely things about coming home to your dog is that they will always be happy to see you, whether you've been gone for 5 minutes or 5 hours. If you encourage this excitement, it will amplify, rather than dissipate. When you come home, don't talk in an excited, high pitched voice and don't look at or touch your dog until he is calm and all 4 paws are on the floor. Sometimes having a toy that you throw for the dog when you first arrive home is enough to take the boisterousness out of homecomings.

EXTINGUISHING THE JUMP

As the dog comes towards you ask it to sit. If it does not comply, then you need to put more work into the sit training. Also if a dog jumps up at you, turn your back and reward the dog when, and only when it has four paws on the ground. If you are consistent and stop everyone from looking, touching or speaking to your dog while he is jumping it will stop much more quickly than if there is intermittent rewarding (ie. If you sometimes give your dog attention, or if one member of the household gives your dog attention for jumping.

REWARD THE GOOD

As soon as all four paws are on the ground, look at your dog and tell him he is doing well. As soon as he starts to leap again, turn your back. You will find yourself turning in circles constantly during the early stages, but eventually your persistence will pay off. Also be aware that a problem behaviour often gets worse before it improves, which may make it seem like the approach is not working. Your dog has been doing the same thing for a long time, so will at first be a little confused as to why he is no longer getting the same response. The natural thing to do is to try harder, so he will leap for the skies for the first couple of weeks. Just remember, that as soon as all four paws are on the ground, reward him (with praise and eye contact), so he gets the idea. Teaching yourself to request the dog to sit BEFORE it gets to you really works, it just requires you to put some effort into teaching a reliable 'sit'.

JUMPING ON GUESTS

If your dog is prone to leaping all over your visitors, try keeping the dog on a lead by your side while they visit. When you hear the door, ask your dog to sit and reward this. You will initially need a helper, but could teach the dog to stay on his mat while guests visit. When the guest comes inside ask them to also ignore your dog. Keep rewarding the calm behaviour and asking your pet to sit. Only allow him off-lead when you are sure he will reliably sit by your side.

If you have some friends, ask if they can practice with your dog. The more occasions your dog has to learn the appropriate response to a visitor, the quicker he will learn. Ask them to ignore the jumping and only give attention when your dog is sitting politely.

Another option for dogs that need constant monitoring when guests arrive is to crate train them or train them to sit on their bed or mat. Give them a high value chew like a Raw Hide or a Pigs Ear when guests first arrive as a reward for staying put. This may not last the entire visit, but hopefully the initial excitement phase can be diverted to chewing instead. If you know you are having a big group of people over consider taking your dog out for a big run so he is not full of energy.