



The Mannerly Dog

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Training Tip Sheet: Stop Your Dog from Jumping Up on People

Why do dogs jump up on people?

1. They've learned it's fun! Some dogs, especially big, playful ones, have learned that people play with them when they jump up; you think you're punishing him by scolding him, pushing him off or "kneeing" him in the chest, but dogs can see it as a play experience and become more joyful and excited.
2. It gets them attention. Puppies and small dogs often get attention by jumping up. It takes some effort to bend over to greet little dogs or give them treats and affection, so they put their paws up on people's legs to get closer. You pet them and give them treats without realizing what you're teaching them.

Telling a dog "Down" or "Off" or even "Sit" may change the situation, but by then he's already torn your clothes or gotten dirt on them.

The best way to handle this behavior problem is to teach your dog to greet people politely. Sitting is a good way for dogs to greet people; they can't jump up while they're sitting, and once they learn this greeting style they'll happily do it every time.

Your dog may already know to "sit" when you ask him to. Sitting to greet people is different because we don't want to tell him to do it every time; we want him to do it automatically so he uses this behavior as a replacement for jumping up. So each time he approaches a person, he'll sit – just as every time he hears the word, "Sit," he'll sit.

To teach your dog this behavior, you have to get it to happen every time he approaches a person or a person approaches him, and reward it every time with a treat. When the person talks to him and pets him, it's an additional reward for some dogs.

To get him to sit, you can lure him with a treat by placing it right in front of his nose and "drawing the nose upward with the treat," then giving the dog the treat when his rear drops into a sitting position. Over time, you'll begin seeing him hint at dropping into a sit when a person approaches. Reward this hint regularly, and you'll see him sometimes actually sitting when a person approaches. Reward these "sits" and you'll see him doing this on a regular basis. He's learning to get treats, attention, and have fun by sitting to greet people, instead of by jumping up on them.

If your dog already has a problem with jumping up, bend over as he runs to greet you, holding a treat out in each hand. As he reaches you, meet him with a treat offered right at his mouth level and immediately pet him so there's no reason for him to jump up. You can begin getting him to sit as he masters keeping his front feet on the floor upon approach.

Your dog will learn over time that in order to get affection and treats, he must sit; he will then be likely to sit when he wants something else from you, like going outside or getting his meal. He will learn to use a "sit" to "ask permission."