

Polite Greeting



Polite greetings (with all four feet on the floor) are hard for many dogs. Dogs naturally jump up to get close to our faces to say hello. Remember that the motivation to greet people is not the problem, but rather the method the dog is using.

Teach an Alternate Behavior

Choose a more appropriate behavior you would rather have your dog do when greeting people and teach him to do it in less exciting situations first. "Sit" is a good alternate behavior, since your dog can't sit and jump at the same time. Once your dog knows how to sit in calm situations, ask him to sit as he approaches to greet you. If he sits, pet and praise him. If he jumps up, ignore him until he stops jumping and then ask him to sit again. If he sits, pet and praise him. If not, work on sit in less distracting situations again. Be sure to reward your dog with attention any time he approaches you and keeps his feet on the floor.

Create a New Routine

If your dog loves treats, teach him to find treats on the floor instead of jumping. Place a container of small, smelly treats near the front door, or carry them with you on walks. As your dog approaches to greet you, or as a person approaches on your walk, drop a handful of treats right in front of your dog as you say "find it." As your dog is sniffing for the treats on the ground, you can calmly pet him. Over time, your dog will start to anticipate the treats and look for them instead of jumping up.

Remove the Reward

Dogs jump up because they want attention. Remember, even negative attention is reinforcing for most dogs, so the best thing to do is completely ignore your dog when he jumps up. Don't talk to him, touch him, or even look at him. This removes the reward he is getting when he jumps up and helps him to learn that this behavior is not acceptable.

Practice, Practice, Practice

Recruit some volunteers to help you. Explain that you are teaching your dog to sit when saying hello to people, and it is very important that they not interact with your dog in any way if he jumps on them. With your dog on leash, have a helper approach your dog. If your dog jumps up, the person should turn around and walk 5-10 feet away. Ask your dog to sit and have the person approach again. Practice this until your dog can remain seated while the person approaches close enough to pet your dog. You can help your dog by feeding him treats and giving him calm verbal praise as the person approaches and pets him. Over time, you can gradually use fewer and fewer treats and less and less praise until you don't need any at all. Practice with as many people as possible so your dog learns that sitting works with everyone.

Management

As with any unwanted behavior, it is important to use management to prevent your dog from practicing the behavior you are trying to eliminate. Not everyone your dog meets will ignore his jumping - and every time he gets attention for jumping up, he is learning that the behavior works and he will be more likely to jump in the future. For a while, you may need to put your dog behind a baby gate or keep him on leash when you have visitors. For encounters on walks, you can step on your dog's leash or squat down next to him and hold him by the collar to prevent him from jumping up.