



Jumping Up

Dogs like to meet new people. People are generally bigger than them, so they jump up to get closer to hands and faces to say hello. Some people don't mind this and will make a big fuss of the dog, which makes it all very rewarding. Other people are not so keen – and some are just terrified if a dog launches itself at them. Clearly, this is not behaviour we want to encourage in the dog. We need to teach dogs that jumping up is not as rewarding as being calm, and staying on the ground because if they choose to do this over jumping up, all manner of good things happen....

First, let's look at the relationship between you and your dog. Does your dog prefer to focus on you or what's happening on the other side of the street, the person coming towards them or the dog behind them? If your dog looks at you instead of all those other things, well done! But you are reading the wrong leaflet as I'll bet you don't have a problem with jumping up.

The key to a lot of 'bad behaviour' – not coming back when called, jumping up, running away, etc - is for you the owner to be more interesting than nearly everything else your dog encounters. This isn't as hard as it sounds, but it does involve some effort on your behalf. Key things to try:

- Play with your dog more – in the house, on walks, waiting outside a shop. Put away your phone and engage with your dog (see the sheet on Play for ideas of how to do this)
- Praise your dog any time he looks at you when you are out and about or doing something where he might otherwise be distracted. Eye contact = treats, a game, lots of 'good girl!!' praise. You can teach your dog to look at you on cue too – get his attention by making a specific noise (e.g. a kissy noise or a click) and give a treat every time it works, with extra good treats for extra quick and prolonged eye contact. Dogs don't give eye contact willingly, it can be quite threatening, so build it up gradually.
- Be more unpredictable. Go on a different route for your walk: have a toy in your pocket that only comes out on walks; have some treats that only come out when the dog chooses you over a more exciting thing; change direction when you're out walking but don't tell your dog – keep him on his toes so he learns to watch you or risk getting left behind.

- Find out what motivates your dog – does he love squeaky things? Tuggy things? Will she do anything for chicken but is not bothered about liver? Does she like high exciting voices or does whispering do it for her?

Once your dog is starting to focus on you more, you can use any of these tactics to distract and reward the dog when you see someone approaching who is a potential jumping up target. Get your dog's attention and whip out the special toy for a good game of tug or whatever – your dog will very quickly associate approaching people with fun and games with you, rather than the new person and will be watching you carefully for the next opportunity to play, rather than racing up and paw planting on a stranger.

If you have a problem with your dog jumping up at people when on the lead, teach the dog that when new people turn up, a look at you and a 'sit' is a much better choice – because it's going to be rewarded with tasty treats and praise.

The aim in all this is to teach the dog an alternative behaviour to the jumping up. There is no point yelling after the dog, calling him back if he won't listen or getting mad – that's just teaching the dog not to listen, or worse, that you are to be avoided and other people might be nicer to be with, which just makes it all worse....

The problem with all this is the people that say 'oh I don't mind!' when your dog leaps all over them and gives them a big rub and a fuss. Every time this happens you are going backwards in your training. If all else fails and your dog is making a bee line for someone, just shout something like – 'please turn away from him, I'm trying to train him!' If the person can just turn around and fold their arms they will instantly be less interesting, and the dog less likely to jump. Catch up with the dog, ask for a sit, put it on the lead and reward well. Then apologise and thank the person profusely! If necessary offer to pay for dry cleaning, whatever it takes... Then go back to practising being more interesting and definitely up your game! Practice 'sit' anywhere and everywhere and reward the fastest responses with the most amazing treats. Pay your dog in rewards for doing what you him to do – he will want to earn more and more 😊

In this litigious society, you can be reported to the dog warden or police, and potentially sued or asked to muzzle and restrain your dog (or worse) if your dog just scares someone by jumping up, even if it's the friendliest dog in the world. Not everyone loves dogs, don't forget that, however crazy that may seem to you.

Increasing the bond with your dog will pay dividends in all areas of training, and make life more fulfilling for your dog. You might even have some fun and it will definitely reduce your dry cleaning bill...