

JUMPING UP AND HOW WE INFLUENCE THE BEHAVIOUR

Jumping up is a common problem in dogs so let's look at how we may be influencing the behaviour and what we can do about it!

Firstly, make sure we don't give attention for jumping up; dogs are likely to repeat behaviour that has been reinforced in the past... so if you reinforce the behaviour with pats or attention the jumping up will continue!

Oh, and this means that if the dog has ever had attention for jumping up before the problem will probably get worse before it gets better! So, if you try to ignore them (after it has worked to get them attention in the past) they will try even harder to get your attention; Think about what you (& family members) are doing and be consistent! If you are not consistent then the behaviour will keep happening and possibly get worse (as the dog is trying harder to get attention as sometimes it works). Stick with it and be consistent even if it appears like its not helping at first!

Attention includes eye contact, touching the dog (or pushing them down) and talking to them. So don't look at them when they jump up and don't touch or talk to them; move your body slightly to the side and give attention when 4 feet are on the floor (you can feel when they are jumping up or not) so use your voice to praise the dog when 4 feet are on the floor (sitting or standing).

See the video on our video galley page of the Clever Creatures website (jumping up).

Ideally pay them attention before they jump up; but not if they are over excitable; let them burn off the excitement and calm down before you give them attention.

Management - Put your dog on the lead for visitors or for when family come over to visit if your dog is prone to jumping up. If not use a child gate barrier to separate them up until the dog settles.

Or put your dog outside so they can see but wait until they start to calm down before allowing dog and visitor to interact.

BODY LANGUAGE

Our body language will affect our dog's behaviour. As above don't give your dog direct attention when they are excitable and prone to jumping. However, if they are excitable and really trying not to jump up then perhaps get them to do something (like get your toy, or go to your bed) and then give them attention. Don't ask an excitable dog to sit still for long periods (like a jack in the box waiting to spring) let them move around or get them to do something.

Turn your body slightly to the side when approaching the dog and don't lean over them.

Try some calming signals (as taught by Turid Rugaas, On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming signals)...

Turn your head slightly as you approach or are approached by an excitable, worried or boisterous dog. You don't need to look directly at them to see them and turning your head can give them the message to slow down or calm down. Dogs do this with other dogs; you can learn a lot by watching them.

Turning away: often this is enough to stop a dog from jumping up. Start with a slight turn to the side rather than fully turning away (as puppies may jump up and grab when over excited). Return with calm attention when 4 feet are on the floor.

Soften your eyes and slow your movement down: In dogs its good manners to soften the eyes (showing a peaceful intention) and slightly averting the gaze. We can do this by relaxing our shoulders and softening our eyes (or slow blinking) when a dog is over excited, scared or threatened by us. We can also take a deep breath and exhale with a sigh. This helps to relax us and may help to calm the dog.

Slow yourself down and if children are running around slow them down. If children are young then make sure you use barriers to separate the dog and child (especially when you can't supervise). Allow the dog to watch the child from a distance (without joining in) to get used to the child's excitable movements. Then (at a distance to start with) reward the dog for remaining calm by giving treats. You may also ask the dog to 'find it' by scattering treats as the child moves around and this also allows the dog to divert their focus and hence calm down. Work on desensitisation with excitable children and puppies so the puppy is managed on lead or behind a barrier & is rewarded for not fixating or getting over excited (and use find it and tasty treats to help calm them)

Try sitting down; this can help to calm an excitable dog. You can cross your legs to prevent them jumping up also. If a visitor comes over have your dog on a lead and then bring your visitor inside to sit down. Chat for a short while and when your dog is calm allow them off lead or even better use treats to distract and calm them before letting them off lead (& and ask for a find it etc).

If you don't manage your dog's behaviour (leads, barriers etc) then you and the dog will struggle. It may lead you to using correction / telling the dog off which is not nice for your dog or visitor and if the dog gets told off every time a visitor comes you may create additional problems as the dog matures. If you don't manage the behaviour well the dog will then need to be separated; further isolating them (which can lead to more excitement and stress) and they don't get the opportunity to learn what they need to do to interact and enjoy the company of family or visitors. Set the dog up for success so they are able to behave and reward them!

If you are still having problems please call us to arrange further training.

By Sarah

Clever Creatures