

How to Stop a Dog from Jumping Up in 5 Easy Steps



Stop a Dog From Jumping

Jumping is one of the most common behavior problems seen by dog trainers, and it can be an irritating habit to break. While cute – or at least seemingly innocuous when your dog is small – once your 80-pound Labrador leaps upon the house guests while you scream, “Don’t worry! He’s friendly!” things can get quickly out of hand.

How to Stop a Dog From Jumping

Simply put, jumping up is rude. No one wants a dog leaping all over them, dirtying pants with paw prints or scratching legs, or worse, clawing at chests and arms. A jumping dog can injure children, damage clothing, and in general create a nuisance whenever friends come over. Luckily, this embarrassing behavior isn’t hard to fix. However, to stop dog jumping we must understand the behavior, and to understand it, we have to look at why it’s occurring.

Jumping up is a natural greeting behavior for dogs. If you watch two dogs greet each other after an absence, they’ll run up to each other and rise up on their front legs, pawing and crashing into each other excitedly. You need to train your dog to greet you and others in a way that’s more appropriate for the human species.

Dog jumping occurs most frequently in exciting, emotionally charged events, such as an arrival home from work or school. Your dog has been waiting at home, probably bored, and all of a sudden, the car pulls in and *you* arrive, provider of toys and treats and love and fun! Imagine how exciting this must be for your dog (and let’s be honest, one reason why we all own dogs is precisely this unabashed and unconditional joy and excitement).

Your dog is overwhelmed and wants to greet you as he knows how – by jumping all over you. The first key to stop a dog from jumping is to remove the emotion from these types of events. Refrain from talking loudly, in a high-pitched voice, or with excitement in your tone that might trigger your dog’s limbic system into overdrive.

It's also important at this point to avoid touching your dog. That's right, when you push your dog off of you, yelling "No! Down! Bad dog!" your dog thinks this is part of the game, and it's fun for him. He is looking for emotional and physical contact, and particularly if you have a dog that is sensitive to touch (retrievers and many toy dogs are), any physical contact is rewarding for your dog. Attention, *even negative attention*, reinforces this jumping behavior, and that includes raising your voice to reprimand him. Loud noises and exciting movements are fun for dogs. Instead, ignore your dog completely, and use the "Four on the Floor" rule.

When you arrive home, pay no attention to your dog until he is calm and has all four paws on the ground. Then, and only then, say hi and touch him. Dogs repeat behaviors that feel good or that accomplish goals. The Four on the Floor Rule teaches him that he can accomplish his goal (greeting you) by calming down and staying put on the ground, and then you'll reward his calm behavior by petting him.

The second critical way to stop dog jumping is to train a mutually exclusive behavior. What this means is that in every situation where your dog is prone to jump, you'll instead ask your dog to do something incompatible with jumping, and that's sitting. Most dogs know how to sit, and it's impossible to sit and jump at the same time.

Using the sit command is the best way to stop a dog from jumping on people during walks. This behavior probably started in puppyhood, when your dog naturally went to greet people by jumping on them and receiving tons of positive attention ("Oh, I don't mind, he's so cute!"). It's not so cute now that your puppy is grown up. The best way to fix this behavior is to actually train the strangers, not the dog.

Stop Dog Jumping by Training Humans

People love to do two things: tell other people's dogs what to do, and feed them. So for this, you'll need to start carrying some treats or kibble on your walks. If someone asks if they can pet your dog, say, "Sure, but he's in training. Would you ask him to sit first?" Give the stranger the food and have them ask your dog to sit. Chances are that they'll love to participate (all humans love control) and your dog will learn that by sitting, strangers pet them and hand out goodies. You can also use this technique to stop dog jumping when guests come over. Leash your dog and control the greeting by handing out dog treats to your visitors when they walk in your front door.

Finally, there are families divided over the whole jumping issue, and this can make training confusing or difficult for the dog. Typically, one member of the family just loves it when the dog jumps up, and enjoys this kind of attention and joy from the dog. The answer for this is simple. Put the behavior on a command, such as "Up!" paired with a hand signal of patting your chest. The dog is only allowed to jump up when he hears that command, and must immediately stop when he hears the word "Enough!" or "Okay!" Ask for a sit if your dog is having a hard time stopping. (My husband does this exact thing with our Komondor, and the dog quickly learned that this command only works with him, not me, and he doesn't jump up when he's not invited.)

Jumping up, although irritating, is a behavior that can quickly be turned around. The good news is that most dogs that jump are very social and have a huge need for human connection, so if something stops working they'll quickly figure out what does work and try it instead. A few weeks of effort is all that's needed to change your pet from a crazy jumping lunatic into a calm, well-behaved dog.

Stop Dog Jumping: Five Steps

Jumping up is a natural greeting behavior but one that can be quickly prevented. You can stop dog jumping by following these simple guidelines:

1. Reduce the emotional component when you arrive home. Avoid fast movements and loud voices. Ignore your dog until he is calm.
2. Follow the **Four on the Floor** rule. Don't touch your dog – and that includes pushing him off – until he is calm and quiet.
3. Train a mutually exclusive behavior. Ask your dog to sit for all greetings and interactions with strangers and reward him with goodies.
4. Leash your dog when guests come over and ask them to help you train by asking your dog to sit before rewarding him with attention.
5. Put the behavior on command if you sometimes like the greeting but others don't. Teach your dog that jumping up is only allowed with the word "Up!"

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