

How to stop your dog from jumping up

Having a dog that jumps up excitedly on you, your children, or strangers may seem cute when they are a puppy, but this behaviour can quickly become annoying and dangerous as your dog grows into an adult.

Jumping up can damage clothing, trip and push people over, cause unnecessary behavioural struggles through excitement and strain the relationship between you and your dog. Teaching your dog that having all four paws on the floor is rewarding and using management techniques to prevent rehearsal will ensure that your dog doesn't cause harm to others and remains calm when people enter your home or meet others while out walking.

Why do dogs jump up?

Previous experience

The more your dog performs an activity or behaviour that provides a reward, the more your dog will repeat that performance. In the case of jumping, a dog will bounce up at a person as an excited greeting and attention-seeking behaviour. Our faces are higher so to interact with us many dogs jump up. Many people will then respond by automatically pushing away at the dog or giving the dog attention, so the behaviour gets reinforced, which becomes the reward – “You touched and interacted with me. That’s what I wanted.”

The dog quickly associates jumping with getting a reward – contact with a human. The more the dog practices this event, the stronger the behaviour becomes, and as the dog matures, the intensity and strength of the jumping can increase, too.

Lack of skills

Dogs that jump also lack three primary life skills:

Self-control allows your dog to observe something they value or desire while controlling their actions.

Disengagement refers to a dog's capacity to recognise the importance of moving away from various stimuli, regardless of whether those stimuli are exciting, concerning, or frightening.

Calmness should be your dog's default state. If your dog is calm, they are behaving appropriately.

Finding a solution

When tackling any behaviour struggle, it is constructive to focus on what you **DO** want from your dog rather than what you don't want. This is more empowering and helps you see where the solution to your struggle lies.

For example, when addressing jumping, you want a dog that greets people and other dogs by keeping all four paws on the floor. Then, you want to teach self-control, disengagement, and calmness and prevent rehearsal through management!

It is also important to teach the people in the dog's family strategies to help the dog find value in maintaining its paws on the floor when their dog jumps up.



Showing your dog disinterest and not giving them any attention when they jump is a strategy to help your dog understand that jumping will not be rewarded. However, what happens when your dog meets someone who doesn't know this strategy? This is where growing life skills comes in. A dog that has self-control, can disengage and remain calm can meet anyone regardless of that person's past experiences.

Management

Management techniques involve strategies to prevent your dog from practising jumping and can include:

Place or boundary training: When visitors arrive, teach your dog to go to a bed, crate or pen. Keep these areas away from the entrances to reduce excitement further.

Barriers and restraints: To prevent your dog from engaging with others, use baby gates, doors or your dog's lead.

Cue behaviours when out and about: Teach your dog to go between your legs (Middle) when stopping for a chat or meeting others. Reward your dog for remaining in place.



Management techniques should be practised when there are no visitors or exciting situations. This not only helps your dog learn what to do, but prevents your dog from associating these measures as a signal that something exciting may be about to happen.

Self-control

Decide how you want your dog to greet people—whether it's all paws on the floor, sitting, or lying down. Teach your dog the desired behaviour, not just what you don't want them to do.

To train your dog to greet people without jumping, sprinkle some of their daily food on the ground when people are present (including yourself). Scatter-feeding discourages jumping by rewarding your dog to keep its paws on the ground, encourages disengagement and grows calmness.

Throughout the day, reward your dog whenever it sits, stands or lays down in front of you.



Disengagement

Moving away from exciting situations is a valuable skill that will stop your dog from jumping on others. By moving away, the dog creates distance from the person or dog and prevents itself from jumping.



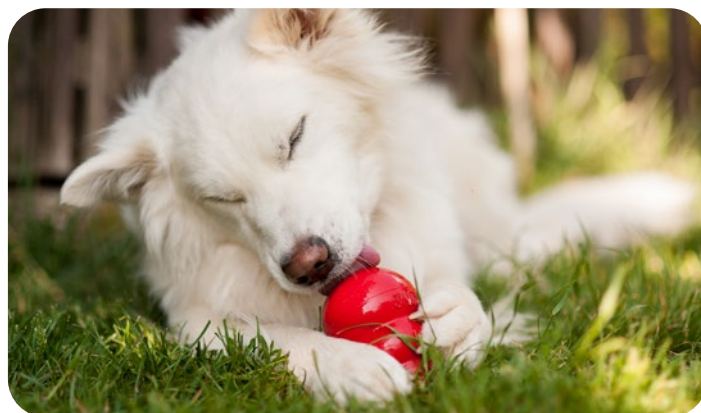
Playing games that make boundaries more rewarding than doorways grows the disengagement skill.

Teaching and rewarding your dog to remain with you rather than moving towards others grows the disengagement skill.

Calmness

Calmness is the ultimate skill all dogs should learn and develop throughout their lives. Calm dogs can control their emotional responses to events that could result in inappropriate behaviours such as pulling, lunging, barking and jumping, to name but a few.

Calmness entails three main facets: adequate sleep and rest, providing your dog with calming activities, and rewarding them whenever they display calm and appropriate behaviours.



These practical strategies to prevent your dog from jumping will help your dog by reducing excitement levels, rewarding calm behaviour, and teaching games and life skills for interacting appropriately with people or other dogs.

Jumping is a common behaviour struggle that many owners face, but it can be easily solved through reward-based, force-free, positive reinforcement training methods.

*Should these solutions not help your dog stop jumping, please consult an **APDT-approved trainer** to assess your pet and provide a more structured transformation plan for you and your dog.*
