

# How Do I Get My Dog to Stop Jumping on People?

**O**ur dogs do not come to us knowing which behaviors we humans find acceptable and which we don't. In fact, sometimes we confuse dogs by rewarding a behavior that at other times we don't like. And there are even times when we inadvertently reward a behavior that we are trying to get rid of. Both things happen when it comes to jumping.



By Kelley Bollen

If you acquired your dog as a puppy, you probably reinforced jumping for a few weeks or months. When they are small and cute, we love when they jump up on us and we reward the behavior with our attention. But when the puppy starts to grow into a larger adolescent, we no longer like this jumping behavior, so we punish it. This is confusing for our dogs – something that has always worked to get our attention now makes us mad.

Another challenge is when other people reinforce a behavior that you are hoping to change in your dog. You could be working to teach your dog that jumping is unacceptable and then your brother visits and allows your dog to jump all over him because he loves it. Dogs just don't understand this kind of inconsistency. If a behavior is being reinforced, even randomly, it stays alive.

Another common challenge is that people inadvertently or unintentionally reinforce jumping even while they are trying to get rid of it. For example: when your dog jumps up on you and you push him off and say "NO!" you have actually reinforced the behavior with your attention. Sometimes even negative attention is rewarding to an animal seeking attention.

So, considering all those things that can be keeping jumping behavior alive, let's talk about how to get rid of the behavior once and for all. The first step is to realize that your dog is not jumping on you to be disobedient (and by no means to be dominant which is what some people will tell you). Dogs jump as a greeting and, if the behavior has ever been reinforced, they will continue to do it.

So, the solution is that you need to make jumping chase you away. When your dog jumps up on you, simply turn around and walk away. Don't touch, speak to or even look at your dog – just turn around and remove yourself from the area (going behind a closed door is very powerful in this situation).

Because your dog is hoping that the jumping behavior gets some attention from you, if it actually does the opposite and chases you away, she will soon realize that the behavior doesn't work to get her what she wants. This is because the consequence of a behavior dictates whether the dog will do it again. If a behavior is reinforced in any way, the dog will repeat it. But if the behavior makes the thing that the dog is seeking consistently disappear, then the behavior is not working. Simply put – dogs do what works for them.

If your dog jumps on visitors, you need to instruct your visitors to walk into the house and if the dog jumps on them, right around and leave, closing the door behind them. Then after a few



seconds, they can try to enter again. It might take your dog several entries to realize that his jumping behavior is chasing the person away, but most dogs will soon realize that this behavior is not working and on the third or fourth entry they will try something else – like sitting or just not jumping. *Then* the person is to greet the dog, rewarding the non-jumping behavior.

If you have a visitor that either won't or can't do the above exercise, you can tether your dog to a piece of furniture or a door knob with his leash when you are expecting this visitor so that he can't run to the door to jump on the person. Management of behavior is sometimes just as important as training because the point is to not allow the dog to perform the behavior that she could potentially receive reinforcement for performing. If you are on a walk and someone wants to say hi to your dog and you don't want to ask this stranger to help you train your dog, simply step on her leash so that she is unable to jump up when the person comes over.

Stopping jumping behavior can be very simple but the key is that you must be consistent, and the same response must come from everyone the dog encounters. Only then will the behavior no longer work for the dog.

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