

Not Jumping for Joy: How To Teach Your Pup Not To Jump
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Jumping. Puppies don't know any better. They're excited and it's natural for dogs to want to greet us face-to-face. But no one wants a muddy dog jumping all over their good clothes. There are many ways to help prevent or cure the undesirable habit of jumping. One of the best ways is to teach an alternative, incompatible behavior. If you teach your pup to sit on command in any circumstance, it will not be able to jump. First, you teach your pup to sit without any distractions present. All training should be done on a leash, so that you have some control and the pup can't just run away.

You can hold a small treat just above and in front of the pup's nose, then slowly move the treat backward. As you do so, give the command "sit." Praise happily ("good sit") but calmly when it sits and give it the treat. It's important for the praise to be immediate and calm when the pup sits, so that it does not get up. Also, the reward for this exercise shouldn't be petting for most dogs. Doing so may make them too excited and cause them to get up. We want to set them up to succeed. Next, use a release word such as "break" for the pup to get up. If you hold the treat too high, the pup will jump to get it.

With all stationary commands, it's important that the pup be tired before you practice. Take the dog for a walk or play a game of fetch first. This will have the added benefit of the pup looking forward to the training, as it has fun immediately preceding the command. Also playing after your training session will create a positive association with the training.

After the pup learns to sit on command, then start adding slightly longer times. Keep the pup sitting for a few more seconds, then release. It can help the dog to sit longer if you add very slight tension to the leash, holding the leash perpendicular to the floor. Release the tension when you release the pup. The tension should never be harsh, tight, or a leash "pop." Keep the training positive. After the pup learns what is expected, vary the amount of time that it must sit. You can also start adding distractions after the pup learns the exercise. Begin with very mild distractions, such as a person walking by approximately eight feet away. As the pup becomes more reliable with low-level distractions, add higher level distractions. If at any point the dog is unable to perform the exercise, go back a step to the level at which it was successful. Then progress.

Eventually, get to the stage at which a person can come up and talk to you, still not petting the pup. After this is successful, progress to the level at which the

pup can be petted in a sit. Don't rush each stage. It's more important that the dog be successful and learn the exercise. It may take weeks or longer to reach the final product: a dog that is calm when you greet it. Be patient. Positive results will come if you are consistent in the training. Eventually, the dog will develop the habit of sitting when someone approaches it.

Old training methods were harsh and involved kneeing or pinching the toes of a jumping dog. Please don't engage in these practices. Not only will they damage the bond with your dog, they can also have unwanted side effects, such as a pup who mouths or bites your hands or jumps back away from you to avoid the negative consequences of jumping. Also, don't just shove the dog away from you when it goes to jump, as this can change into a negative "game" for the dog. Doing so can even cause a dog to jump more, as some dogs may even want negative attention rather than none. Positive training will yield positive results.

There are other methods to teach your dog not to jump. A good one is an exercise that teaches the pup to think and to have self control. Hold a treat in your hand, with your hand enclosing the treat so that the pup can't get it. Hold your hand just above the dog's nose. At first, the pup may paw at your hand. Ignore the unwanted behavior. Eventually, the pup should sit or stand. When it does, immediately praise calmly and give it the treat. This exercise makes the pup figure out that the good behavior of sitting earns the rewards. No command is necessary. If the pup doesn't sit, it doesn't get the reward.

Other methods to help teach a pup to not jump even when it is not on a leash involve ignoring bad behavior. A pup is about to jump on you. Step back, turn away, and fold your arms across your chest. By doing so, the pup can't grab onto you. Praise calmly only when the dog is calm. If everyone who greets the pup is consistent in engaging in this exercise, the pup will learn that unwanted jumping won't get attention. It's very important that everyone who greets the dog be consistent.

Another method that can help teach the pup not to jump is to teach the "off" command. You can have the pup on a leash and have someone walk toward you, stopping just out of range of the leash. As the pup is about to jump up, give the command "off" and wait until it calms down. Reward the calm behavior. Another method is to place your foot on the leash just where it meets the floor (still holding the handle of a six-foot leash), so that your dog can comfortably stand or sit. Praise and reward all calm behavior. Praise only when the dog has "four (paws) on the floor." Happy training without jumping!