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Help! My Dog Jumps on Me!

The principles outlined in this handout are intended as a general guide only and should be applied under the supervision of an Accredited CGC™ Instructor.

This is not a program for aggressive dogs. If your dog has shown aggressive behaviour toward you, your family, or other people, you should speak with the Instructor listed at the top of this handout.



Jumping up on people is a very common, natural doggy behaviour which most people find difficult to prevent. It is not a pleasure to own a dog that jumps on your family and visitors. Quite apart from the nuisance factor of having muddy footprints on clothing, your dog (let's call him Deeper) can cause injury to people by knocking them off-balance and sometimes tearing skin with his doggy claws.

Why do dogs jump?

To find a way of managing this behaviour you must first understand why jumping is a natural behaviour for Deeper. To do this you need to look back to when Deeper lived in a social group of wolves - before he was domesticated by us.

Jumping is generally thought to be a behaviour left over from Deeper's wolf ancestors. Wolf pups licked their mother's mouth when she returned from hunting and this caused a physiological response in the mother to regurgitate some of the food she was digesting. The puppies then ate this to supplement their milk diet, and to aid in their introduction to solid food.

This behaviour soon turned into an appeasement gesture toward their mother and other group members. Puppies licked at mouths and faces to indicate that they were babies and therefore of no threat to older bigger wolves.

Similarly, in our world Deeper learns as a puppy to reach up and lick his mother's face for attention and to appease her when she is angry with him. This behaviour then turns into jumping up as he transfers his efforts to humans, who are of course generally taller than his mother.

When Deeper jumps up at humans they are seduced by his cuteness and unintentionally reinforce the behaviour by giving him the attention he craves. They "gooh" and "gah" over him, chat to him ("Aren't you beautiful!") and often reach down to pat him whilst he paddles his forelegs against their shins. Even more often their response is to lift Deeper up to their level so they can cuddle him more closely.



All of the above responses are seen by Deeper as rewards for jumping, so he learns pretty quickly that jumping up gains attention and (in his view) appeases the human members of his social group, so he thinks it must be a pretty good thing to do. Sometimes this can even result in Deeper feeling that his

status in the group has improved, because he is gaining attention on his terms. This can eventually cause leadership problems. (*For more information please refer to our handout on Leadership.*)

Although humans tend to tolerate (and unwittingly encourage) this behaviour whilst Deefer is a puppy, they then complain when it becomes a problem as Deefer grows larger and is still jumping up when he is maybe 65 cm tall and weighs 40 kg!

Why shouldn't I punish Deefer for jumping?

Punishments such as stepping on Deefer's toes, yelling at him to get down, and smacking him, although intended to dissuade him, usually cause him to jump more! He sees that you are frustrated with him and tries even harder to appease you by jumping more in attempts to get closer to your face to lick.

Also, because Deefer is essentially a social animal, in his view any attention is better than none. Your physical punishment may be seen by him to be better than no attention whatsoever. Punishment can also cause other problems with Deefer. For example, smacking Deefer when he jumps may result in him beginning to fear a hand coming toward him, as he may think it intends to punish him. He may then end up displaying aggressive behaviour toward humans in order to protect himself from what he sees as a threat.

Young children in particular can become unintended victims of this punishment. They tend to wave their hands around more than adults and Deefer may decide they are threatening him, so may react in an aggressive manner toward them.

What should I do instead?

We recommend that you use simple, non-threatening methods to discourage Deefer from jumping up. These methods are based on giving Deefer attention on your terms, not his. You also need to set him up to succeed. By this, we mean ensuring that Deefer doesn't have the chance to be rewarded for jumping, as every time he is rewarded - either intentionally or unintentionally - the chance of him jumping again increases.



So, to begin with it is a good idea to have Deefer on lead when expecting visitors in the early stages of "no-jump" training. This is *not* so that you can jerk him away from the visitors - an act that would probably give Deefer bad feelings toward visitors! This is to allow you to control his access to the visitors, so he cannot go racing toward them to jump all over them.

You can actually use the visitors to teach Deefer that jumping is not a required behaviour by having treats ready for the visitors to give to Deefer when he is behaving well. (*See "Reward Four on the Floor" and "Practise Approaches from Humans" methods below.*)





Everyone in your family must also understand what methods you are using and why they need to follow the rules about not rewarding Deefer's jumping. It is confusing for Deefer if one family member allows jumping when others don't. A commitment must be made by the whole family so that you can succeed in having a "no-jump" dog.

If Deefer is a small puppy and people want to say hello to him, we suggest that they kneel down to Deefer's level. This way young Deefer may not feel he needs to jump. If everyone does this with Deefer from the beginning, then Deefer may not learn to jump up at all!

However chances are that Deefer will already have learnt that jumping is rewarding - you now have to stop a behaviour that has already become a habit.

So, what methods do we suggest?

We have found the following methods to have a high success rate with jumping dogs, particularly if they are all put into practice:

-  Turn & ignore
-  Reward four on the floor
-  Teach Deeper an alternative behaviour
-  Practise approaches from humans

Let's have a look at these methods in more detail.

Turn & Ignore:



One of the easiest ways to let Deeper know that jumping is not a behaviour you want, is to ignore him when he jumps. Any reaction from you will be seen by Deeper to be a reward and will probably cause the behaviour to increase. So, you need to learn not to react to his jumping either verbally or physically, so that he receives no reward to encourage him. You must be silent, not yelling or saying



"get down", "stop that", *etc.* You must also refrain from pushing him away, or kneeling him in the chest because Deeper will view this as attention.

You need to ignore Deeper when he jumps, and even give him the "cold shoulder" by folding your arms and turning away. If you do this, Deeper will work out pretty quickly that jumping up doesn't give good results. This method works best when followed by the "Reward Four on the Floor" method.

Reward Four on the Floor:

Remember that Deeper will repeat those behaviours which are most often rewarded, so to encourage Deeper to keep his four paws on the floor it makes sense to reward him when he does this!

So, if Deeper jumps up at you and you ignore him, you must remember to quickly praise and reward him as soon as all four of his feet are on the ground. You should praise him and give him a couple of tasty treats, or a favourite toy to play with. If you do this consistently, Deeper will soon learn that having "four on the floor" is much more rewarding than jumping up at you. You must be quick with your praise and rewards, so that Deeper understands why he is being rewarded.

Better still, try to catch Deeper with four on the floor *before* he begins to jump or even thinks about jumping. You can turn this into a game for the whole family, with a reward for the person who is jumped on least! This way, Deeper doesn't get the chance to practise jumping.

Teach Deeper an Alternative Behaviour:

Another good way to teach Deeper not to jump, is to teach him to perform an alternative "good manners" behaviour instead. So, for instance, teach Deeper to sit when you approach him, or when he approaches you. If you request a sit and reward him consistently for sitting, he will be far more likely to sit than to jump, as he will remember that sitting brings a reward.

After a while he will begin to sit automatically, as you will have reinforced this behaviour so often. If Deeper is sitting, he cannot physically be jumping at the same time!

Practise Approaches from Humans:

Now that you have some ideas on how to teach Deefer that jumping doesn't pay, you need to practise a lot. However, before you practise, you must teach your family and helpers what they must do to help Deefer learn not to jump. So explain the rules to them before Deefer is allowed to greet them.

If you have visitors who don't want to follow the rules, then we suggest that Deefer be given an alternative activity away from them whilst they are visiting. Everyone who will be helping must also have treats available to give to Deefer when he does the right thing.

Begin with Deefer on lead, and have your helpers approach him one by one. If Deefer is four on the floor, or sitting, they must reward him straight away with a pat and a treat. If he jumps they must turn away from him and only turn back when he is four on the floor again to give an instant reward.

It is a good idea if you have rewards ready as well. That way, if your helpers are not quick enough with their reward, you will be able to reward him instead. It is even a good idea to vary where the rewards come from - sometimes from you, sometimes from the person approaching - this way Deefer will not think other people are always more exciting than you!

Sometimes Deefer doesn't quite understand what you want. He may stay down until you reach him and then suddenly jump up. In this case you need to keep Deefer's reward down low, so he is not encouraged to jump. Try quickly crouching down as you get in close to him and reward him from this lower position. Progress to a more upright approach after a few low approaches - do this gradually to help Deefer succeed.

Also, try using your free hand to give a pat as you offer the treat. Rubbing Deefer's chest instead of his head or neck will also encourage him to stay down. Gently throwing some treats on the ground near Deefer as you approach may also help, as he will focus on the treats, not on you. This will give you time to get in close to him and the opportunity to reward him for the desired behaviour.

These approaches need to be practised in all the places you would normally take Deefer, so that he learns that jumping up never pays - no matter where he is.

Can my dog still jump up for a cuddle?

Some people are happy for Deefer to jump up on them occasionally, as long as he doesn't jump on other people. We suggest you teach Deefer this only after he has mastered the art of not jumping.

If you want Deefer to jump up to give you a cuddle, then it is best to put the "jumping up" on cue (a voice and/or body signal) and *only ever reward Deefer for jumping up if you have requested it first*.

Your cue may be something like saying the word "Cuddle" as you pat your chest or hold your arms out to him. If Deefer jumps up, reward him with a cuddle and then release him.

Only ever reward him for this if you have requested it first - *never* reward him for jumping up before you request it.

If he begins to jump up again without your request then it may be best if you don't allow this behaviour at all, as Deefer may be confused about when he is, and isn't, allowed to jump.



Using these methods will help Deefer to understand that jumping up doesn't bring rewards, but good manners do.

Remember that everyone in Deeper's household should commit to this program, as Deeper will be confused if some people allow him to jump, and some don't.



For more information on Canine Good Citizen™ training for your pet, contact the Instructor listed on the front page of this handout.

For more information on the Delta Society go to www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au

Look for the other Handouts in the Delta "Help!" series:

-  Help! My Dog Digs!
-  Help! My Dog Needs Better Manners!
-  Help! My Puppy Bites!
-  Help! How Do I Housetrain My Puppy?
-  Help! My Dog Barks!