

Jumping: Part One by Marcia Albert

Who can resist a greeting from a jumping, wiggling, yipping puppy at the end of a long day? The ecstatic little girl boosts the spirit and adds a bit of zest to homecoming. Because we feel flattered by the attention, we encourage the behavior and rationalize by thinking, “The pup is young; she’ll soon be grown, it’s important to enjoy her at this young age” or “I’ll hurt her feelings if I don’t acknowledge her attention”, and before long the pup is a well trained, welcoming committee of one. But pups have a habit of growing into big, goofy, clumsy dogs who continue to greet by jumping, wiggling and barking. The sincere welcome that used to boost the spirit becomes a chaotic battle- her paws now reach our waist, her nails scratch, her bark is piercing, and she won’t settle down. Now, what can be done?

One of the most effective ways of stopping a dog from this frenzied behavior is to ignore her when she is jumping. Sounds simple, and yet it is a difficult thing to do, especially after we’ve done such a good job of training him. Usually when a dog jumps we use our hands to push the dog down; or we say, “No” or “Off”. If we’ve learned to ignore we do, but then the dog jumps, accidentally scratches us, and it hurts! We react with words “OWWW” or push him away. So in fact, we haven’t ignored the dog’s behavior. People say time and again, “But when she jumps I yell at her or push her away, so I’m not giving her attention.” You aren’t giving positive attention, but you are giving negative attention, and when a dog can’t get positive attention, negative attention will do. So take no notice of her, turn your back, go on about settling in. If she tries to move in front of you, turn away. If she jumps on your back, walk away. After she settles down, wait five minutes, call her to you, ask her to sit and quietly praise her. Give her a treat also, but not every time—keep her guessing about when she’ll get a treat. If she jumps during this part, start the whole thing again. Sounds like a tough thing to do; but wait..... there’s more.

This process takes time. How much time? That depends on your dog and your commitment to the rules. Some dogs catch on quickly and some take weeks to learn, but look at the situation this way. You may spend a month or more, every day, every time any member of the family comes home practicing this exercise, or you can live with Jack-In-The-Box for the next twelve years.

Once your dog’s four feet stay on the floor when family members enter the house it’s time to practice for company. And here is where you find out who your true friends are. Explain exactly how you’ve been practicing this exercise, and make certain your friend understands about ignoring and turning away from the dog. Next, set up a time when you and your friend can enter the house together, perhaps after running an errand together. Make certain your friend has tasty treats tucked away in a pocket. Walk in and watch how your dog behaves. If she jumps, have your friend run through the routine; if she behaves have your friend ask her to sit. After she sits, he gives her the treat.

Remember patience, perseverance, consistency and kindness.

Now that you have some control over your dog’s behavior when greeting you, your family and one or two close friends, it’s time to think about his reactions to doorbells and knocks.

As you know, the sound of the bell or door knocker can send some dogs into a frenzy. Once the dog speeds off to the door, barking and carrying on, your chances of getting him to settle down are slim.

You remember that good friend you have that helped you when you were training your dog to keep all four on the floor? Call him again. Oh yes, remind him to come armed with treats.

This time he's going to push the doorbell button and wait patiently until you open it. Tell him that he may have to wait a while until you're ready to open the door.

As your dog goes tearing off to the door you'll notice that she looks back as if to say "Are you with me on this or not?"

Don't follow. Wait for the barking to stop, then go to the door. If she starts barking as you walk toward the door wait until she's quiet and then continue to the door.

When you are at the door ask your dog to sit. When she does you reach for the knob.

Most likely she will immediately get up. If she does take your hand off the door knob.

Do not physically control the dog in any way.

Do not open the door until she sits as you open it.

As your friend enters your dog may break the sit, have her sit again.

Now your friend can quietly greet, praise and treat.

By the way, take your friend to dinner. He's a great guy!!!!