

Polite Greetings

Why do dogs jump?

1. Love of human contact
2. Not knowing what is appropriate in "people" language
3. They may greet other dogs that way.
4. They have been reinforced one way or another for this behavior

It is up to us to teach our dogs how we would like them to greet us. The key to teaching your dog polite greetings is consistency and repetition. A good way to remember this is "Four on the Floor." This simply means that all four feet should be on the floor when greeting.

Even if someone insists, "It's okay! I like dogs!" while your dog is jumping up to greet him or her, it is up to you not to allow this behavior. Be polite but firm with anyone who wants to make an exception to the rule of "four on the floor." Equally important is teaching your dog a mutually exclusive behavior - for example, a dog cannot jump on a person if the dog is sitting!

Getting Started

Begin by having the human who is helping you stand at a distance. Wait for your dog to check in with you. This means, at the bare minimum, making eye contact. If your dog reliably knows his or her name, you may say it ONE time. **Note: Repeating anything will just teach your dog to ignore you.**

As soon as your dog looks at you, mark with a word or click from a clicker. Then reward your dog with a treat. Do this several times, until every time someone new appears, your dog is checking in with you.

Now that your dog is checking in, allow the person to come closer. If at anytime, your dog does not have four paws on the ground, have the person back up. If your dog is able to keep all four paws on the ground, be sure to praise him or her!

Continue this until the person is able to approach your dog while all of your dog's paws remain on the floor. Keep the leash loose and have the person put their hand out and low. Dogs explore things with their noses, so this is a great way to incorporate an alternative to jumping.

AS SOON as the dog's nose touches the hand, mark it with a click or a "YES!" or whatever word you use to let the dog know the exact moment it has done the right thing.

Since your dog has become accustomed to hearing this word for checking in, they probably will turn to you for a treat. Reward your dog and have the person walk away. As your dog gets better at this exercise:

Practice in many locations...AND

1. Add distractions that typically involve the jumping behavior such as: a knock at the door
2. or doorbell ringing
3. Wait for your dog to also offer a sit or a down instead of just having four paws on the
4. ground
5. Practice with many people
6. Increase the amount of time that the person is interacting with your dog.
7. Randomize the number of treats. While you always want to use praise and a marker

word, when the dog is consistently doing the right thing, you want to alternate how many rewards are given. Sometimes give one treat, sometimes five treats, sometimes none. This keeps the dog always wanting more (think of yourself as a slot machine!)

Helpful Hints

Remember, if your dog jumps, no need to correct him or her, simply have the person back up. The lack of attention and contact from the person is a better way to teach your dog than a tug on the leash. It will keep training enjoyable!