

canine questions

By Sharon Harvey

Q I can't get my dog to stop jumping up on people. It was OK when he was a puppy, but now he weighs 67 pounds. I've tried kneeling in the chest, but he just keeps coming back for more. What can I do?

A Dogs that jump up are usually just saying "Hi." This attention-seeking behavior is reinforced every time you pay him the least bit of attention. You might find it hard to believe, but he probably thinks a knee in the chest is better than getting no attention at all.

Modifying the behavior will take tremendous will power on your part. You must NEVER, EVER interact with him in ANY way when he jumps up. Turn around and walk away; don't make eye contact, don't laugh, don't touch him, and don't yell at him. He must learn that demanding, attention-seeking behavior will NOT get him what he wants. Instead, reinforce him EVERY single time he sits in front of you, even if you haven't asked him to sit. A dog that's sitting can't be jumping, right?! You want him to start to associate sitting in front of people with getting lots and lots of attention and treats, while jumping up means being ignored. The distinction must be very clear and consistent. Ask every person who comes into your home to do the same thing. He must not be given attention for jumping on anyone, but everyone should reward him when he sits. Soon, you'll start to see him offer the behavior without hesitation.

Would you like him to be completely out of the way when visitors arrive? If so, teach him to go to a spot and stay there until called. Start by reinforcing him every time he goes to his spot—it could be a dog bed, a crate or just a place in the room. Once he knows where it is, put the behavior on command by standing next to the spot, pointing at it, and saying, "go to your spot." Repeat this over and over until he goes every time you give the command. Gradually increase both your distance and his distance from the spot

before giving the command. When he lands on his spot, give him his treat. Eventually, you should be able to stand by your front door and send him to his spot on command. Once he's doing this reliably, move closer to his spot, give him his command, but wait a few seconds before you reward him. Gradually increase the amount of time he stays on his spot before he gets his goodie. Finally, build both the distance you're sending him and the time he has to stay on his spot before giving him a reward. Once you can stand by your front door and send him to his spot for two minutes, you're ready to add distractions.

Enlist the help of family and friends in setting up some practice arrivals. When you first add distractions, you'll need to move closer to him so you can enthusiastically reinforce him for staying on his spot—even though it's killing him! Again, with the distractions present, gradually add distance and time before he gets his reward. Eventually, he'll learn that he'll get everything he wants, and more, without having to jump on you or your house guests.

Now, if you can't resist a challenge, get busy teaching him to go to his spot whenever he hears the doorbell! You're right—the training fun just never ends ...



You might find it hard to believe, but he probably thinks a knee in the chest is better than getting no attention at all.

If you're having a problem with your cat or dog, call the Rescue Village HelpLine at 440.338.4819, ext. 13 or send an e-mail to askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org. We'll help you solve your problem or refer you to someone who can. The most frequently asked questions will find their way into the Rescue Village Reporter's Ask the Trainer column or onto Q104's Ask the Trainer radio segment that can be heard on Sunday's Wilde & Fee Morning Show during the 8 o'clock hour.