

**The Mannerly Dog**  
**A Mannerly Dog is Easy to Love**  
Pasadena, Texas

**TEACHING A DOG TO SIT TO GREET: IT'S WAY BETTER THAN JUMPING UP!**

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Dogs that jump on people are annoying at best, and dangerous to older folks and small children at worst. Sometimes it's hard to see how a behavior like jumping up is benefitting the dog, so we're perplexed as to how to change it.

Picture a puppy meeting someone new; the human doesn't bend down and pet the little pup, so he jumps up on the person's legs. The human speaks to, pets, or playfully tickles the pup while he's up on his rear legs, ensuring the puppy's behavior is reinforced and he'll do the same thing next time.

Instead of petting, another human pushes a pup off when he jumps up; the pup, considering this the instigation of a new game, responds by jumping up again. In a different way but with the same result, the behavior of jumping up has been reinforced and it will happen again.

Another human might try to punish the pup with a knee in the chest when he jumps up. If he's a smaller and under-confident pup, this may be enough for him to resist jumping again; but he may be hesitant to approach a human next time. If he's an exuberant, outgoing pup, he may jump up with more force the next time, excited to play the new pushing game

These examples illustrate why physical punishment is not the way to respond to a dog's experiment in behavior, because we can create a hesitant pup who becomes a wary adult dog, or one who jumps up with gusto on everyone he meets. These habits are difficult to change.

When we begin the first time we meet a dog or puppy by recognizing which behaviors we want to develop and which we don't want the animal to learn to do better, dog owners have a unique opportunity to set dogs up for success by teaching them good manners. Using routine, consistency, and reinforcement can help dogs form new habits that they'll likely maintain for life.

Begin by reinforcing good habits the first time you meet him. If you're at a shelter, you can reach down to give the dog a treat or pet, even through the fence. This may help the dog to keep his front feet on the floor. If the dog jumps up on the gate, wait for him to get off and immediately step forward, reaching down or even squatting to pet him or give him a treat. The

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more you reinforce him for having those front feet on the floor, the more quickly you create the habit of “not” jumping up on people, gates, counters, tables, or anything else.

For those in rescue groups who take in dogs from their owners: the moment you walk in a surrendering owner’s door, you’re not only evaluating his dog for rescue and adoption, you’re also training. By applying your knowledge of dog behavior to the situation, you may be able to help an owner keep his dog. Show this owner how to interact with the dog appropriately, suggest a local trainer they can consult, and this dog may keep his home. Arm yourself with treats before you go inside. If the dog attempts to jump up on you, simply take a step back, turning to the side so he can’t. Repeat if necessary. When the dog lands on all fours and looks at you quizzically, give him a treat. Step away and let him approach you again, giving him a treat if he steps toward you without jumping up. Feed the dog a treat each time he sits, lies down, or stands on all four feet, and you’ll quickly teach him how valuable it is for him to remain on the floor. Yes, it’s a lot of treats; they’re your training tools when each one is given for behavior you like. The dog will need consistent input from his owners to build this behavior, but the die is cast once you’ve reinforced his remaining on the floor. If you do end up taking this jumping bean into rescue, you’re setting him up for success in his future home by ending his jumping through teaching him a desirable alternative behavior – 4 feet on the floor.

What if your own dog already has a habit of jumping up? Follow the strategy laid out above, with the added codicil that you *know* he’s going to jump up when he approaches you. You know because he does it every time and he’s not going to spontaneously stop, so stop kidding yourself. Have the treat ready to give him at the level of his mouth while his front feet are on the floor as he approaches. Place the treat right at his mouth *before* he jumps up, while his feet are still on the floor. Then you can ask him to sit and reinforce that with another treat. Do this every time and you’ll change his habit. Have all family members, friends and visitors cooperate with the new plan. Approach it from the perspective that the last time he jumped up on someone will be the final time he ever does that, apply these ideas, and enjoy your dog’s new way of greeting people.