

# NO LEAPIN LIZARDS: GETTING CONTROL OF YOUR DOG'S JUMPING PROBLEM

Do you find it necessary to lock Bouncing Bowser in another room before inviting in friends and relatives so their clothing remains intact and their hips and wrists remain unbroken? Do you walk Raucous Rover at odd hours of the day and night to avoid meeting another living soul on the sidewalk? If so, it sounds like you have a jumping problem.



Jumping problems are most often found with adolescents (dogs 6-18 months old). Toy, terrier and sporting breeds such as Italian Greyhounds, Poodles, Jack Russells, and Labrador Retrievers are notorious jumpers. And belligerent, dominant dogs such the Rottie that puts his feet on your shoulders to better stare you in the eye or the Pit Bull that uses you like a basketball backboard also cause jumping mishaps. Dogs jump up because they want to get closer to someone's face.

For most, peak jumping behavior is observed around the high points of your dog's day — mealtime, your homecoming, walk time (you pick up the leash and the bouncing begins), out on the walk itself, and when friends and relatives come to call. This problem can be solved by calm, consistent training. The proper amount of exercise for your dog's breed type is of great help, too! Lack of exercise results in out-of-control whirlwinds who lack the ability to focus.

## WHAT TO DO:

Since a dog jumps in order to solicit attention and to get nearer to your face, when you see him rev up to leap, say "No, off" and turn away from the dog. Removing your attention (a reward to the dog) is a gentle, effective way to correct the dog. As soon as he has settled either with four feet on the floor or in a sit/down-stay, turn back around, drop to your knees and quietly praise the dog.

➤ Give the jumping behavior a name, so you can turn it on and off. At my house, it's called "leapin' lizards" but "paws up" or "feet up" can suffice. Teach your dog how to jump up on command, then add "no" as in "no paws up" to let the dog know when you don't want him to jump up.

➤ More importantly, give the dog something else to do. Obedience training is a strong plus when trying to get a jumping problem under control. A dog holding a sit or down-stay is not a jumping dog. When attempting the sit or down-stay, avoid pushing, shoving, flapping your arms or other fast, excitable movements. Use a lure-reward method rather than physically manipulating the dog. Avoid raising your vocal tone or whining. All extra movements and excited vocalization will incite the dog. Here is a situation where the old Bauhaus motto, "Less is More," really applies.

➤ To aid the dog in holding his sit or down when visitors arrive, put him on a leash before opening the door; this way, you have a means of control at your fingertips.

➤ For an unfocused bouncing maniac, give him just enough leash to do a sit or down-stay and step on the rest. When the dog attempts to move, he will correct himself. (This may not work for a 100 lb. person with a 200 lb. dog, but it works well for most handlers.)

▶ Be consistent. Never let the dog jump up without being directed to do so. A dog cannot distinguish between dirty, old blue jeans and a designer suit. He cannot tell which days it is okay to jump on you by what you are wearing or what the weather is like. (“If it’s cool and dry and I’m wearing my jogging suit, jump away. If it’s raining and I’m wearing my white Chanel suit, don’t you dare lay a paw on me!”)

▶ Be consistent with strangers, too. Do not let someone confuse your dog by stopping you in mid-correction by their crooning, “It’s OK, I just looove dogs,” while kissing and stroking your dog and rewarding him for his misbehavior. There is nothing wrong with not allowing people to pet your dog unless he is on a stay command. Guests to your home are no exception. Warn them beforehand. (“I’m training my dog not to jump up unless commanded. I could really use your help. Please don’t pet him or even acknowledge him unless he’s holding his stay.”)

For the Slow-Learner, jumping set-ups are in order. On a week-end or vacation day, arrange for a friend, neighbor, or relative to ring your doorbell every 10-15 minutes for a couple of hours. Each time, put your dog on a leash, command him to down or sit-stay and open the door and greet your visitor. Sometimes giving the dog a distinct place such as a small foyer rug helps him to focus on his job (go to your place and lie down). Your visitor can give your pup a treat or a tickle if he is behaving, but should ignore him if he is not.

Once the dog is under control, the visitor leaves, only to return again in another 10-15 minutes. This goes on until Rover understands that his job is to stay put until he is told to do otherwise.

### WHAT NOT TO DO:

Remember that your dog is your friend and companion. There is no need to knee him in the chest, hit him on the head with a children’s book, squeeze his front paws ‘til he is frantic (this often leads to mouthing), or step on his back feet — solutions you may come across in out-dated literature. By teaching him the acceptable behavior and rewarding him for carrying it out, you become the fair, humane leader every dog needs.

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