

Helping Your Exuberant Dog

Dogs who jump up or who are really mouthy with people may be trying to play, saying hello, trying to get your attention – or just may be really excited and unsure with how to express themselves! A lot of times, these dogs are young dogs who have not had much training.

Working with an exuberant dog will take practice and patience! Consistency will be key to success. You'll need to ensure everyone who interacts with your dog treats him the same way. You'll want to encourage your dog for polite behavior and discourage jumping up or mouthing. Always approach training with a positive attitude, if you are feeling frustrated, stop the training and take a break.

Tips for Success:

Let your dog know that you are not interested in interacting with him when his behaving inappropriately. When he jumps/mouths:

- Turn to the side and become a “statue” (stand still, cross arms, no eye contact or talking).
- If that doesn't work, give your dog a five minute time out. Leave the room, crate/tether the dog, or put him in a quiet, dog-proof room alone. After a brief break, try again.

Teach your dog to “sit to say hi”. Wait for your dog to sit before greeting him. Praise your dog for sitting and being calm.

Work on having him “settle” at your feet and gently praise him for lying down. If he gets up to pace, call him back and use a treat to lure him into a down again or if he is on leash, hold him with approx. 4 feet of leash and wait until he offers a “settle” by lying down. Reward verbally and treat when he does this.

Avoid any wrestling games with your dog. These will increase his excitement. Instead, teach your dog to play fetch with a ball or plush toy. Praise him for picking up a toy and bringing it back to you. Ask him to “sit” before throwing the ball again. Encourage breaks to keep your dog from getting overexcited.

When your dog is excited, offer a favorite toy. To make the toy come alive, toss it away from your dog and encourage him to “get your toy!” Whenever he carries the toy around, he should receive a lot of praise and attention! The attention should stop if he drops the toy.

Make sure your dog gets enough exercise. Along with walks and fetch, find ways to provide mental stimulation. Use puzzle toys or a Kong to feed him, teach him new tricks, hide treats around the house and ask him to “find it!”

Do not physically punish your dog. Your dog may misinterpret physical punishment (like kneeling him, grabbing his muzzle or paws, or holding him down) as play or he could become scared and defensive. Either way, the jumpy/mouthy behavior could get worse instead of better.

Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.