

Jumping Up

By Marlene Stachowiak

The "jumping" subject keeps popping up with at least two paws on the owner. As soon as the dog is brought home it is... BONG... BONGING off your chest or the mother-in-law's dress. There are no limits to the creative jumping that the new dog or pup will attempt in order to achieve the joy of getting your attention! That is why soooo many articles have been written on this subject! We all know there is no "magic wand" in dog training. I have seen "wands" being carried to dog trials but they are not for the purposes of stopping unwanted jumping!

Dogs do not get up in the morning and say they are going to drive you *crazy*. Spouses might do that, but not the pure soul of a dog! Dogs do not make moral judgments. They do not understand the concept of what is *good* and what is *bad*. Dogs only do what is *satisfying* and stop doing what is *unsatisfying*.

To a dog, you do not live at your shoe level, you live in your face and hands. There are several reasons why dogs will jump on people. I am going to deal here with jumping for attention or a "greeting."

The problem is how to teach the dog not to jump without losing the dog's trust in the owner or physically endangering the dog or the trust. In years past, several methods seemed to dominate the conventional "wisdom." One was a hard knee into the dog's chest. Imagine the dog, running with great joy and trust, he jumps up, placing his "welcome" flat dab onto his human's abdomen, only to have the human knock the air out of the dog. What happens to the trust? It flies out the window! In rare documented cases, the chest was crushed or the dog died from too hard a blow directly over the heart. Another method that some claimed to work wonders was the old "step on the back toes" method. I never could figure out how a person of my stature (5'2") could manage such a coordinated maneuver: holding the front paws of even a medium-sized dog while extending one's leg at least three inches farther than one's leg can reach and simultaneously putting enough pressure on the back toes of a dog to convince him to stop jumping...? Of course, the pressure has to be measured carefully so that the handler does not fall over or damage the toes of this trusting dog!

There has got to be a better way to instruct our clients to teach their dogs not to do unwanted jumping. There must be methods that are easy for the novice to understand, with which even the poorly coordinated or weak individual can succeed in a short period of time. Popping the leash and saying "OFF!" won't work for many people and their dogs. The timing has to be just right - it is usually too late by the time the handler says "Off!" and the dog gets the satisfaction of successfully jumping on someone. Besides, the dog does not learn to take on the responsibility of not jumping. Some dogs will depend on the vocal command of "Off!" and that gets tiresome!

No, there is a better, quicker, cleaner way to convince the dog to stop unwanted jumping.

So, let's get on with it! The first step is to teach the dog to release any pressure he initiates on the leash. With the dog on a leash do not give any commands. When the dog starts to pull the leash, jerk the leash only hard enough to get the dog's attention. The jerk should not move the dog's body. Think of it as tapping on someone's shoulder to get that person's attention - not a shove. The jerk is not stopped and started again. That cycle could continue forever! What one should do is keep popping the leash until the dog moves back enough to release the pressure the dog had put on the leash. As soon as the dog moves back, the handler starts praising. The dog may come to the handler but most will then head out in a new direction to see if the "doggy-god" gets them again. A buckle collar, in my opinion, requires too much pressure to get the dog's attention in the beginning. Later, the dog certainly may use a buckle-type collar. Keep in mind that the dog does not breathe out of the back of his neck. A collar that gives a more even distribution of pressure would be my preference. Most dogs learn that it is their responsibility to release any pressure of the collar themselves within a few tries. Dogs that are not taught this simple lesson must think they are going for a hanging instead of for a pleasant walk.

Now the dog has learned that it can relieve any pressure of the collar by its own action, it can take on that responsibility. We can then proceed to stop the unwanted jumping! As the handler is moving up to talk to someone, at the reception desk in the vet's office or opening the door or gate to allow company in, the dog will soon learn not to jump "at" or "on." With the "handle" of the leash in one hand, step with two feet on the leash in such a way that there is room for the dog to only stand without pressure on the

collar. If only enough leash for the dog to stand is allowed, it will not be enough to twist around the handler's legs. If both feet are on the leash even if the dog does twist around the legs, there is an escape route. The handler does not give any commands. We hope the dog will try to jump. Since he has learned to release the pressure, he will either stop jumping and stand in such a way that the collar will not be tight or, like most dogs, he will go into a sit without a command - without even formally having learned to sit on command. Then the handler praises the dog. If the dog "teaches itself" not to jump, there will be more consistent behavior, quicker. It's sort of like telling teenagers to do something - better if they think they chose the desired behavior on their own.

Hang the leash on a door knob and, when company comes, snap the leash on the dog. The company is not to pet the dog until it stops jumping. If the dog starts jumping again during the petting, the "petter" must step away until the dog figures out how to get that person to pet him again, which is to stop jumping or go into a sit.

Dogs that have been taken into heavy human traffic areas at parks and on neighborhood walks have learned within a week's time to stand still or sit when they want to be petted. It is a thrill to me to see a wiggly butt and wagging tail in a self-imposed control position, requesting petting! Eventually, this skill will transfer to off leash. By the time control is expected off leash, the handler will have many more skills and commands that may be used. One must allow time for the "short-term memory" to transfer into "long-term memory."

How about a "quicky" fix? Teach the dog to jump and touch the flat palm of your out-stretched hand. Start with a really good treat between your fingers. Hold it just above the dog's nose so he has to stretch to get the treat, on the command "Touch." Eventually, the hand is held higher for a high jump. The next step is to have the palm parallel to the ground and high about the dog's head. The dog jumps and touches the palm on command and the other hand gives the treat. Soon, all you need to do is to hold your hand out away from your body and the dog will not jump on you. This is a great stress release for many dogs in the obedience ring. Of course, no treat in the ring! The dog will learn to jump for the pure joy of it.

My own dogs are allowed to jump on me when we play. They first had to learn "off" before they were given the privilege of jumping "on." Yes, they drive me a bit nuts jumping into the air all around me when I come home. They look like trout going upstream! At least as much like trout as a Boxer, two Greyhounds, a Miniature Schnauzer, and a Pharaoh hound can look.