

JUMPING



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DOG TRAINING

WHY DO DOGS JUMP ON PEOPLE?

- Jumping is socially acceptable amongst dogs; it's part of their vocabulary.
- It's one of the ways they express stress or ask for help from humans.
- At some point when they were younger, they were allowed and/or encouraged to do it.
- Arousal is activating your dog's nervous system.
- Something about the environment is still reinforcing it.
- Usually, jumping is an attention-motivated behavior.
- Occasionally, it's a high-arousal behavior called "height-seeking."

DO NOT:

- Knee your dog in the chest.
- Use squirt bottles with water or vinegar.
- Pinch the front paws or stomp on the back feet.
- Flip them over.

If these appear to work, it's because your dog will just stop wanting to interact with you (can you blame them?).

These also tend to raise arousal, which, if not expressed by jumping, will leak out as other annoying behaviors.

IGNORING BY ITSELF DOESN'T WORK!

Much online guidance regarding dog jumping recommends ignoring them during the act and providing attention only when they are "calm." However, this approach poses a couple of issues. Jumping is likely already on a "lean reinforcement schedule." That means it requires barely any attention to maintain, and removing all reinforcement from interacting is nearly impossible. Sometimes, even "bad" attention—like if you pet or even scold them—is enough to maintain it.

DON'T JUST "WAIT FOR CALM"

Second, Simpawtico's view is that "waiting for calm" often just wastes your and the dog's time. Between "not jumping" and "calm," there are dozens of opportunities to reinforce better behavior, and you miss those when you're holding out for "calm." Just work with your differential reinforcement (which you'll learn about in a minute). "Calm" will evolve naturally, but it's not necessarily where we start.

OKAY, SO WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

STRATEGIC MINDSET

INTENSITY BEFORE FREQUENCY

In the correct progression, you will see a reduction in intensity before you see a decrease in frequency. Jumping will progressively get less forceful and prolonged before actual jumping incidents diminish.

Keep in mind that persistent jumping—to the point it's enough of a problem that you're reading this document—is not a weekend project. It requires dedication and consistency to diminish this behavior and establish new ones in its place.

KEY: INTENSITY BEFORE FREQUENCY

MAKE SURE YOUR FEEDBACK IS ON POINT.

Feedback is crucial to having a dog. More often than not, though, owners' feedback is weak. Some of the main points pertinent to jumping are:

Don't take any good behavior for granted, especially something you got for free. If they were bad 5 seconds ago but are being good now, TELL THEM! Fast, representative feedback is critical.

Use Markers. You're missing half of your teaching opportunities without using clear End and Support markers (i.e., "Yes!" and "Good"). Review our article on markers for more:

<https://www.simpawtico-training.com/marker-training/>

Although you'll reinforce everything you like, some things will be "gooder" than others.

Scale your feedback and reinforcement commensurate with these; this is called "**Differential Reinforcement**." I've written an in-depth article on this, too:

<https://www.simpawtico-training.com/differential-reinforcement-in-dog-training/>

"Reinforcement" doesn't always mean food treats. Food works great in training—and you will sometimes use food when you're training jumping countermeasures. Jumping, however, is mainly attention-motivated, so you'll be using **attention as your main reinforcer here**.

KEY: ONGOING, BINARY, AND REPRESENTATIVE FEEDBACK

PRACTICAL TACTICS

<1> BLADING-OFF

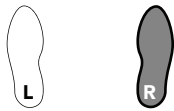
This is your primary strategy for in-the-moment management. When your dog approaches you, pivot your body slightly to the side. Avoid offering a large target by facing them directly, reducing the temptation to jump on you.

Executing a smooth turn necessitates precise timing. As your dog nears, step back with one foot, transfer your weight to the rear leg, and pivot your leading foot. This positions you in a sideways "bladed stance." Concurrently, extend your back hand to offer a target for them to direct their nose towards.

Timing it correctly will guide your dog to position itself naturally across your legs, a posture they typically adopt to seek affection from humans. Through consistent practice, your dog will anticipate this action and instinctively choose to position itself in this manner. Remember to shower them with affectionate pets and genuine praise while in this stance to reinforce it as a favored behavior.

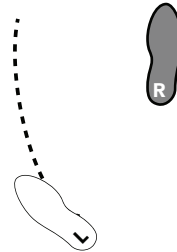
KEY: MINIMIZE TARGETS

1.



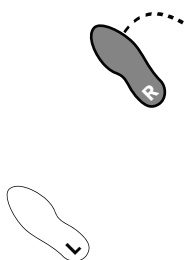
Feet shoulder's width apart (dog incoming)

2.



Extend dominant foot back and pivot 45°

3.



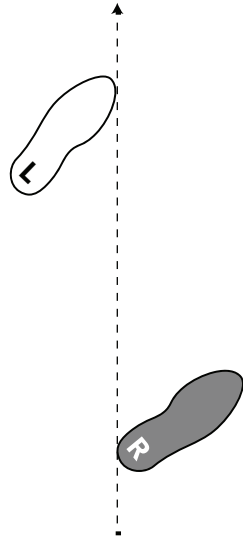
Pivot lead foot 45° and try for heel-toe alignment

4.

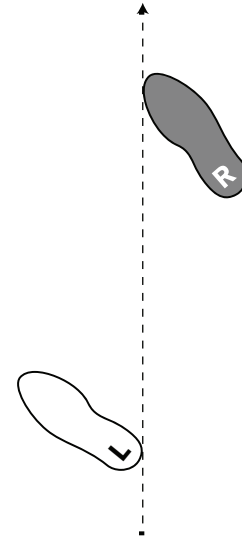
Dog now comes in across your legs



LEFT-FORWARD



RIGHT-FORWARD



Not too close or too far apart
Not too square or sideways
Heel/Toe alignment
Distribute balance and mobility



Hand target

Bladed stance

<2> SHEDDING

If your dog makes contact with you, you can still blade-off or make a quick back or side-step to shed them off of you. Then, when your dog is back on all fours, step up, and praise and pet.

Immediately provide good feedback! Just shedding isn't sufficient. Immediately reward your dog when all four feet are on the ground. This is differential reinforcement, a key part of effective training!

While your dog is moving around you, keep moving your body so they have to go sideways across your body. This will help prevent successive jumps.

KEY: "ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES"

<3> TRAIN AN AUTO-SIT

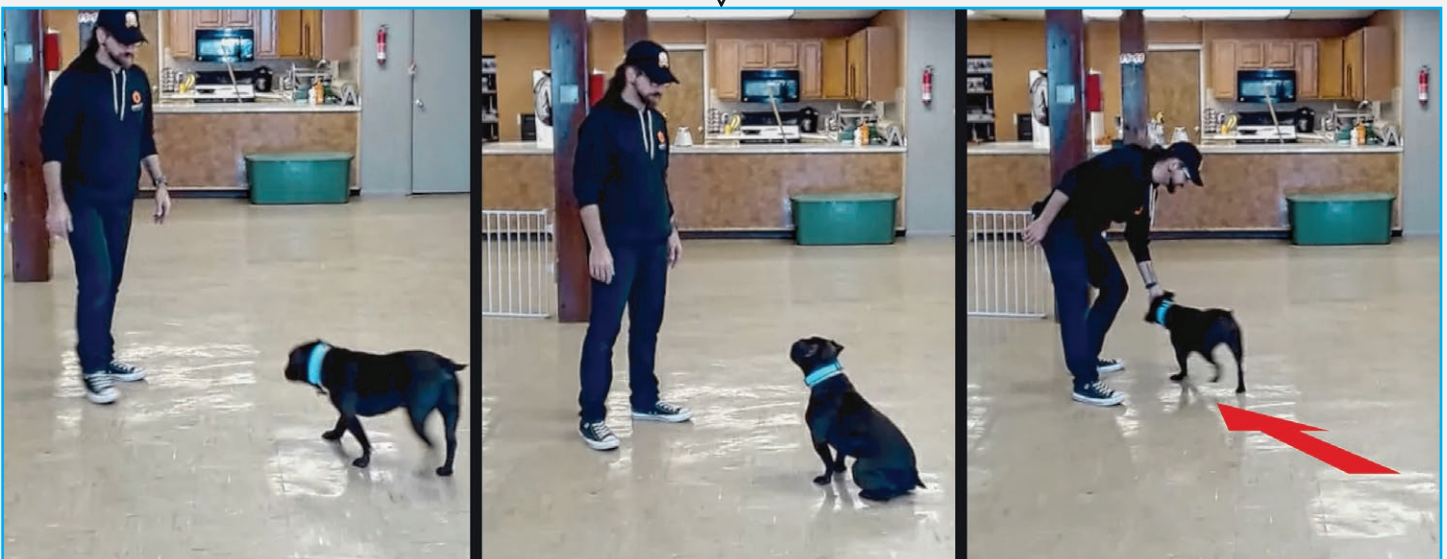
Train your dog to sit reliably without being asked. This way, they'll behave well around guests, offering sits without prompt. If they forget their manners, you can ask nicely, relying on their well-rehearsed sit command. Make sure to practice this in a reward-based system before using it in exciting situations.

Auto-Sits are one of our main tactics with jumping (and manners in general). Your dog has to have something else to default to when jumping doesn't work. For that to work, Auto-Sits must have a strong reinforcement history, i.e., PRACTICE. Don't wait until your dog is jumping; practice Auto-Sits every day and capture and reinforce them at every time your dog offers them.

I have a separate PDF about Auto-Sits on the website, as well as a video on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/ZW0jqMLzcUQ>

KEY: SHOW YOUR DOG THE BEST WAYS TO GET ATTENTION OR ASK FOR HELP



<4> SET UP YOUR FENCE

This is not a training technique, per se; It's a management interrupter when your dog forgets their manners and you're in a jam. Sometimes, you can't shed them off of you because you're sitting down or in a corner. Or maybe your dog is being pushy that day, and you have already tried shedding four times in a row. Sometimes, you're just kind of stuck. In these cases, it's not training time; it's management time. This is how we insist on our boundaries. In these cases, set up a fence. Use your hands to block the dog from coming into you.

It's important to establish your boundaries. Just as you do with people in public, it's perfectly fine to set limits with a dog, even if it's your own. Your personal space and comfort should always be respected. *Set your fence!*



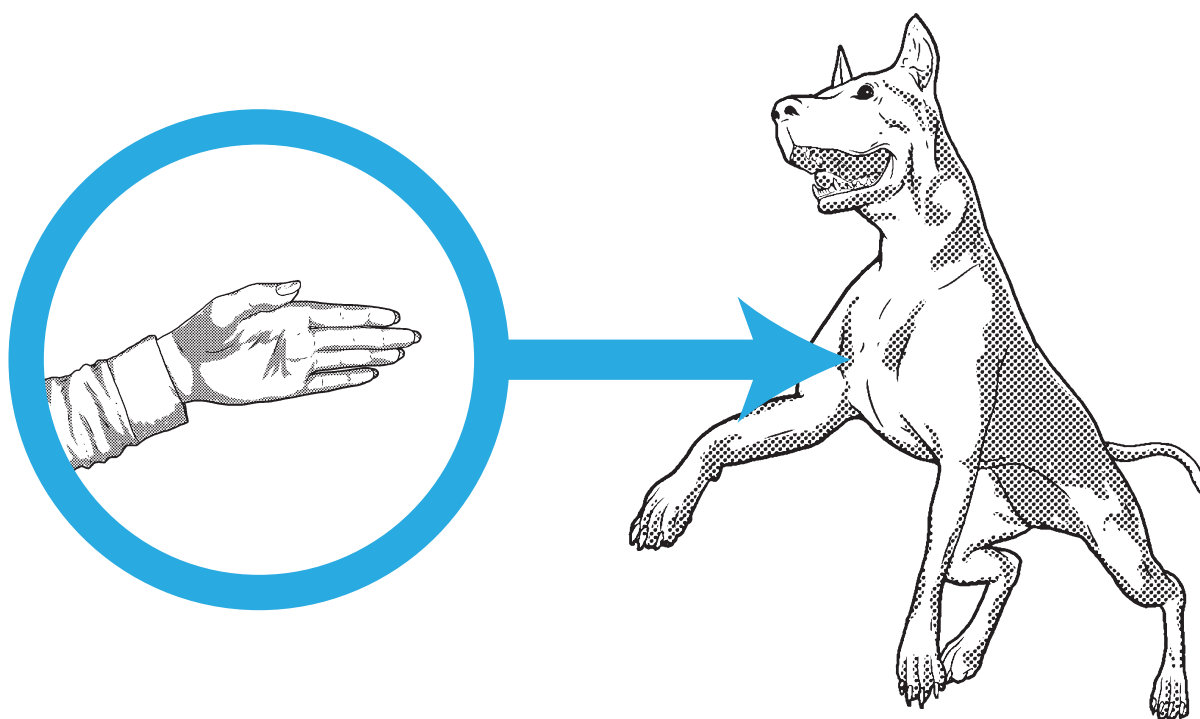
FOR AN EXTREMELY PERSISTENT DOG:

Form your hand into a flat-fingered instrument. Press the hollows between the sternum and shoulders, then push your dog away.

This is NOT a Kung Fu jab! It's slow, evenly measured pressure. The goal is not to intimidate or hurt your dog; it's meant to create enough uncomfortable pressure for the dog to back off you— AT WHICH POINT you praise and reward with petting. This is a management tool, not a training tool.

If you use the pressure tool often, your other training is not up to snuff! You need to do more training away from stimulating situations so that you don't need to use this. It's not intended to do the training for you. This is a "fire extinguisher" technique, and if you're using your fire extinguisher all the time, it means your fire prevention needs serious revision! Keep logging time on rehearsals and other manners training so those skills circle back around and filter into your jumping work!

KEY: NOBODY (DOG OR PERSON) SHOULD ENTER YOUR SPACE INAPPROPRIATELY



This management technique is not meant to be a regular practice. Sometimes, it's not even your dog doing the jumping; it's someone else's. Do not let a dog punch you, tear your clothes, get paw prints on your work pants, or act like a menace!



If you find yourself in a situation where you are unable to move away from a dog that is displaying obnoxious behavior, such as if you are seated or cornered, you may need to use a flat hand tool to protect yourself. It's important to remain calm and not react to the dog's behavior, as this could activate the dog further. Once the dog has calmed down and all four feet are on the ground, be sure to praise them by saying "Good".

If this is a common occurrence, additional training will be necessary to address the underlying issue(s).

ADJUNCT TACTICS

TEACH A RELIABLE “GET OFF” COMMAND

Putting any problem behavior on cue allows you to teach the opposite, effectively giving it an off-switch. There’s a complete lesson available as a separate PDF if you’re interested! On a side note, “Get Off” is also a good tool for counter-surfing!

1. First, ask your dog to jump up on you. I know, I know, that sounds crazy, but hear me out. You’ll Lure-Reward train for this.
2. Beckon your dog to jump up. Pat your chest (or knees for a little dog). You may have the food lure reward in your hand.
3. The dog jumps on you.
4. Say, “Good” (our duration marker), and feed your dog a little while they’re on you. See if you can keep your dog on you for a second or two.
5. Then say, “Get Off.” Point to the ground, quiet your body, and W-A-I-T. This makes it non-rewarding to remain on you.
6. Your dog gets off of you and has all four paws on the ground.
7. Say, “YES!” and praise and reward your dog with a prolonged reward.

From now on, practice the entire Hug+Off cycle every day. By the end of day one, fade the lure, and remember to reward only the quickest hugs and offs. Gradually reduce the treats in between, but amp up the reward at the end. Always make Getting Off more fun than Getting On! Keep it lively and engaging, aiming for positive interactions. Remember, these are requests, not punishments. Once your dog gets the hang of it, a simple “Get Off” will be a gentle reminder of good manners.

IMPULSE CONTROL

As with many other things in a dog’s life, increased impulse control will create many powerful changes. The Impulse Control Suite is where the bulk of this work is done:

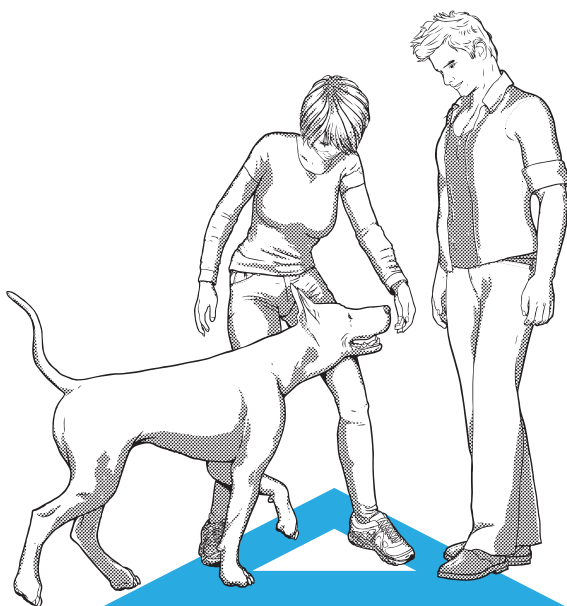
- Take It + Leave It
- Waits and/or Stays at doorways and thresholds
- Tug and/or Fetch (Drop It)
- Loose Leash Walking and Heeling

Shoring up your impulse control, in general, will also foster positive changes in your jumping problem. These things are all connected.

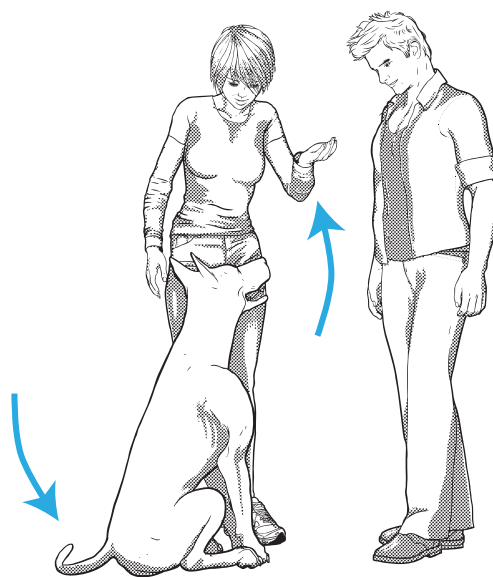
KEY: YOU WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY WITH MORE TOOLS IN YOUR TOOLBOX.

TEACH "SAY HELLO"

Teaching a dog "Say Hello" (sit for greeting) is a great way to short-circuit jumping when people come over. A dog that knows how to greet people politely is far less likely to jump on them. This is a whole training objective in and of itself. We teach this as part of our walking progression.



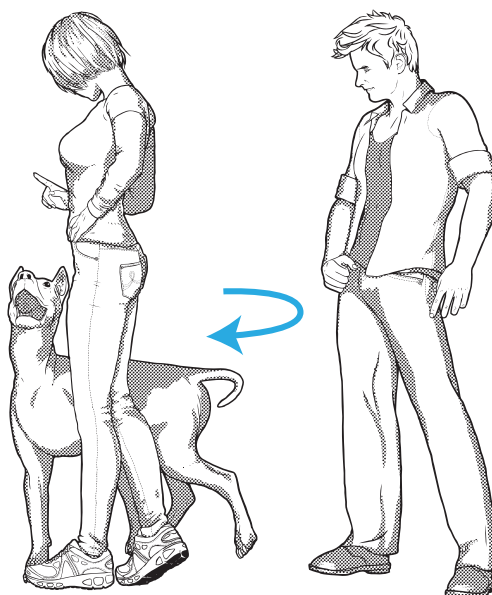
1. Bring your dog in so the three of you make a triangle. Use a leash if your dog is jazzed up.



2. Prompt your dog to sit.



3. Now (and only now) your friend can pet your dog.



4. Mark "Yes!" and move away into reinforcement. Lather-rinse-repeat!

LIMITED MOBILITY

If you are unable to execute some of these tactics because of limited mobility, here are some accommodations:

- 1. Eradicate Jumping Opportunities:** Make sure NO ONE in your dog's life inadvertently reinforces jumping. That means when Aunt Edna visits, she absolutely cannot allow your dog to jump on her for kisses. Consistency is vitally important.
- 2. Stationary Body Blocking:** Position your wheelchair or chair near a doorway or in a strategic area where you can use the frame of the chair or the wheelchair itself as a physical boundary to discourage jumping. This method utilizes your presence and the object's barrier without requiring you to move, similar to the "blading-off" tactic.
- 3. Set Up Physical Barriers:** Install baby gates or pet fences in certain areas to manage your dog's movements and limit their ability to jump on you unpredictably. This can help teach them that staying on the floor is more rewarding while keeping you comfortable and secure.
- 4. Use Verbal Commands and Hand Signals:** Leverage the power of your voice and visible hand signals to control your dog's behavior. Commands like "Get off" can be reinforced with specific hand gestures to convey your expectations without needing physical maneuverability.
- 5. Recruit a Helper:** Have a helper jumpstart the training for you, like Auto-Sits and Get Off.



FINAL WORD ON JUMPING

Dogs are inconsistent, just like we are, and a chronic jumper will probably do it occasionally, even after you've worked with them. Always default to your trained tools because that's what the dog knows! Don't surprise them with new stuff you've never done before, especially in a triggered situation (e.g., Aunt Louise stops for an unexpected visit).

GOOD LUCK!