

TEACH YOUR DOG TO GREET PEOPLE

For many dogs, meeting new people can be all too exciting. This can sometimes manifest in jumping up, licking, mouthing or general hyperactive behaviour. Lots of dogs simply don't know how to deal with people in this situation, so ideally we want to teach our dogs to greet people politely, whether in the house or out on the street.

This may take some practice and you will likely need the help of other people. You will also need to practice ignoring those unwanted behaviours, such as jumping up, licking, intense sniffing, etc. Even negative attention is still attention, which can be reinforcing for a dog that craves attention.

Here are a few tips on how to teach your dog to greet people

Excitement often starts before a new person has even walked through the door. Your dog may bark at sounds like the doorbell or even the front gate squeaking. To help with this, we want to change the dog's initial reaction to these noises and show them a preferred behaviour. For example:

- Identify the first trigger of excitement, in many cases this is the doorbell.
- Ring (or have someone ring) the doorbell. If your dog remains calm, give them a treat. If your dog reacts, ignore the behaviour until your dog settles – then give them a treat.
- Repeat this until you have the desired reaction. For example, when the doorbell rings your dog looks at you calmly, expecting a treat.
- Delay the reward for 3 – 5 seconds to build up the time your dog is expected to be calm.

By reducing this excitement before the new person comes in, your dog is in a better frame of mind to greet a person calmly. Asking for a controlled behaviour such as 'sit' is a good alternative to jumping up behaviours. Take a look at our advice about how to teach your dog to sit.

Now it's time to reinforce the positive behaviour. Try these steps:

- Ask a friend to ring the bell. Ask your dog to sit slightly away from the door as the new person enters. You can have your dog on a loose lead if it's easier.
- Reward your dog for continuing to sit as the new person enters. If your dog gets up, the person should move back, and the exercise should start again without reward.

- Repeat this with the dog sitting for as long as possible. Ideally, you want the new person to be able to stand beside your dog as they remain in the sit.
- When your visitor is ready to interact with the dog, you can tell your dog that it is OK to greet them. 'Say hello' is a good command to use for this.
- Give a treat to your visitor and ask them to drop this on the floor as the dog approaches. This will focus the dog's energy downwards, rather than jumping up.
- You can then ask the visitor to have a brief, calm interaction with the dog before moving away.
- Once the visitor has moved away, give your dog a treat away from them. This will encourage your dog not to follow and pester the visitor, or any new person.