



CENTER FOR
Shelter Dogs

A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON

JUMPY/MOUTHY BEHAVIOR

Your new dog has been jumping up on people energetically and “mouthing” them. Dogs who jump up are either trying to play, to say hello or get attentions. The jumping up is often accompanied by the dog’s mouth on the person’s arms and legs. Usually the mouthing is painless as hardly any pressure is applied and is not done to do harm.

If you follow the recommendations below, you will be able to teach your dog not to jump on people and mouth them.

Discourage unacceptable jumpy mouthy behavior. When a dog demonstrates jumpy, mouthy behavior:

- Let the dog clearly know that you are not interested in this form of play.
- Turn your back, stand perfectly still, cross your arms and close your eyes
- If the dog does not give up, try a time out. (Either walk out of the room, crate/tether the dog and leave the room)

Note: Some frequently recommended methods to stop jumpy/mouthy behavior such as “kneeing”, grasping the dog’s feet and squeezing, grasping the dog’s muzzle or scruff often make matters worse. Many dogs misinterpret these behaviors as play and think that they are fun. As a result the jumpy/mouthy behavior gets worse instead of better.

Encourage and praise acceptable forms of play and greeting:

- Whenever the dog is in a playful mood, or when you do things that bring on the jumpy/mouthy behavior, such as petting or attaching a leash, offer a favorite play toy. To get the dog more interested make the toy “come alive” by throwing it.
- Teach the dog that he or she will only get good things and praise after sitting (see Say Please training document)
- Teach the dog to play games with people such as retrieving a ball or plush toy. (See retrieve training document)
- Whenever possible, set up play times for the dog to play with other dogs
- Don’t forget to follow all good behavior with praise by saying “Good dog!”

If the above methods used consistently still are not decreasing the behavior sufficiently, try gentle forms of punishment

- A spray of water or shaking a can of coins will often interrupt the behavior long enough to get the dog interested in playing with a toy.

Note: Tapping, slapping, or hitting jumpy/mouthy dogs may backfire. Some dogs may also become “hand-shy”, afraid of people, or try to defend themselves by biting. These methods are not recommended by the Center for Shelter Dogs.