



## Impulse Control: Reducing Jumping

by

*Laura Garber, CPDT-KA*

The best way to inhibit undesirable behaviors is to train a **DRI (Differential Reinforcement of an Incompatible)** behavior. For instance, instead of jumping up, wouldn't you prefer if Fido sat?!

**ANTI-JUMPING:** When Fido jumps up, fold your hands across your chest and turn away. If he persists, walk into him, taking up his space as he was taking up yours. This will make jumping up less fun because you become a less predictable target. Do some slaps to your thighs or stomach, something he might perceive as inviting jumping, but then turn away. This is to thwart the attempts of other people to get Fido to jump up on them. Reward him for making the right choice, *sitting!* Sitting is a *DRI*.

### IMPULSE CONTROL

Instilling impulse control means teaching your dog that he gets the things he wants for polite behavior, not for demanding behavior. If Fido wants to go for a walk, dancing around when he sees the leash is going to make the leash go back on the hook; sitting quietly to be leashed up is a successful way of saying please and will get the desired result. While waiting for his meal to be prepared, barking and whining will mean that the dinner bowl goes back on the shelf out of reach; sitting calmly and waiting to be released to his bowl will earn his meal.

Ideally, with impulse control exercises, you don't want to tell Fido what to do explicitly. That would be solving his problem for him. Instead wait for polite behavior to be offered. This way your pooch is learning how to be a polite dog *every moment* of the day, not just the moments that he's receiving direct instruction from you.

- **COOKIE DROP (anti-jumping):** This is an exercise in impulse control. With Fido in a sit, start with the treat a few feet above his head. Slowly lower it. If he gets up from his sit, jerk the treat higher, but as long as he remains seated, steadily lower the treat. In the beginning, move quickly over the last few inches approaching his nose, as this is when it gets the most tempting. As he gets better, use the same slow descent for the whole drop. What Fido learns is that jumping up makes the treat get farther away.

- **POLITE GREETING:** Guess what... another impulse control exercise! Step on Fido's leash (control position) where he'd be comfortable seated. Wait for a "sit" – be patient! If necessary, cue the "sit", but eventually wait for it to be offered. As the visitor approaches, if Fido breaks the "sit," the visitor backs up. Only when he's back in the "sit" does the visitor move forward again. All of this is without verbal direction. He will understand the consequences simply from the visitor's movements. With repetitions, this will get better. Start with less exciting people and work towards more exciting people. Have them start pretty low-key, then get more animated as he's doing better. Try to see if he starts offering a "sit" rather than having to ask him for one. Note that he's better taking treats than being touched by the visitor. Start by just giving him treats; it was easier for him to keep the "sit". Gradually do a little petting, offering a treat from the other hand or you, the handler, offering the treat.

*Detail:* While you'll initially use a leash as a management tool to prevent your dog from jumping up, you will begin to notice that the leash will no longer be necessary, that Fido is learning that polite behavior gains him the attention he craves.

### **Using the TIME-OUT**

When Fido is practicing an undesirable behavior, like nipping at heels or being barky, mark with a negative reward marker ("uh uh!"). If the behavior continues, then say "Too bad!", and grab Fido's leash and take him to a door, putting him on the other side of the door from you with the leash threaded through the door to your side. (Alternatively, you can tie the leash to a door handle and walk away from him, if that's easier. Or you can leave the room yourself, closing the door behind you, and only returning when he's quiet.) The time-out shouldn't be long, only 15 to 30 seconds, just long enough for Fido to miss your companionship but not so long that he gets distracted with another activity. Let him back in and interact again; see if the behavior is being inhibited. If not, repeat the time-out. Do not let him back in if he's barking or otherwise complaining.

*An important note:* Make sure that, when putting Fido into the time-out, you do not touch him but instead just grab the leash to usher him away. Physical contact with the dog will be construed as reinforcement of the behavior.