

August 1998

## **My Name is NO NO BAD DOG!**

(Part One)

One of the remarks most often made to dog trainers is "My dog is really well trained except that he won't..." and you can usually fill in the blank with: come when called, stay, or stop jumping up on people.

Let's work on training a dog NOT to jump all over friends, relatives, strangers or even the mailman. It *can* be done (with dogs of any age) and with Positive Reinforcement Training it's not hard to do.

We'll begin with what causes the behavior. First of all, dogs like to be in your face, literally. Canine to canine greeting behaviors starts with sniffing each other's faces - exchanging scent information as it were. Small dogs in particular tend to jump on people, because they are trying to reach your face. Secondly, dogs that jump up are trying to get you to play with them. This behavior is often very strongly developed in high-strung breeds and/or very people oriented breeds and the excitement of making contact with you is just too much for them to handle. But dogs that jump are extremely annoying (even to most dog lovers) and can be dangerous around very young children and older people, so let's get to work and stop this undesirable behavior!

We'll begin by teaching your dog not to jump on you. When your dog jumps up (or even bumps you or grabs your hand or clothing), stand completely still - dogs interpret any movement on your part as an invitation to play. Avert your eyes and say nothing. Don't push him off or knee him in the chest, which can cause injury and does nothing to teach the dog not to jump up. In other words, completely ignore the behavior. Any interaction on your part will only reinforce it. Ask the dog to sit and when he does, reinforce it with a small food treat. If he jumps up again, repeat the sequence. The dog will quickly learn that jumping up will not get him what he wants, i.e. a response from you and that sitting quietly will earn him a reward. Behavior that is *not* reinforced becomes extinguished. Behavior that *is* reinforced becomes permanent.

Once you have jumping up under control (not taking place), move on to teaching the dog not to jump on other family members, guests, or people out in public. This is a little harder to do, as people will often say that they don't mind if the dog jumps all over them. Be firm and tell them that you *do* mind and that you are training him not to do it - would they be willing to help you? Follow the same sequence: tell the person to stand still, be quiet, and not to interact with the dog in *any* way. If the dog does not remain calm, with all four feet on the ground, tell the person to step back out of the dog's reach. When the dog regains control of himself, they can step forward and try again. Reward (reinforce) NOT jumping up - give him a little food treat, or praise, or let the person you are working with pet the dog. At this point, you can take a short break and play with your dog. Short training sessions interspersed with playtime makes the work enjoyable and fun for both of you.

Some dogs over-react even to small amounts of stimulation and go ballistic when they come into contact with someone (everyone)! You can work more easily with dogs like this, and help them succeed in learning this behavior, by having them on leash. Ask the dog to sit, drop the leash and step on it. This limits the dog's range of motion and allows you to keep the dog under control. If the dog breaks the sit and lunges forward as someone approaches, tell him to sit again and ask the person to step back and stand still. If the dog remains in a sit, the person may approach again and the dog can be rewarded. The dog is learning two things: that jumping up or breaking the sit gets him nothing that he wants or likes, and that remaining in a sit and staying calm earns him things that he does want and likes. Broaden the dog's range of experience by training this behavior in a variety of locations - a supermarket or mall parking lot, oath Post Office are great places to work on this. People will often come up to you and ask you if they can pet your dog and are happy to spend a few minutes helping you out with a training session. The more people a dog interacts with, the better he'll get at behaving in an appropriate manner.

Dogs, like people, learn quickly and easily when they are reinforced for making good choices. If you are willing to put some time and effort into teaching your dog how to behave well in human society he will reward you with increasingly good behavior. "My name is NO NO BAD DOG!" will become a thing of the past.

REMINDER: The "Dog Days" of summer are upon us. Please remember that dogs left in parked cars are at **extreme risk** from the heat. Even with the windows partly open, the temperature inside a car can quickly climb high enough to cause the onset of heatstroke, which can be fatal. It's easy to lose track of time when you are in a comfortable, air-conditioned store. Don't let your dog become a statistic!!!