

Hyperactive Puppies

Puppies are full of energy and require lots of exercise. Just like children, they need lots of opportunities and time for play. The timing of exercise, attention, and playtime should be **your choice**, not the puppy's. When your puppy tries to get your attention by jumping, lunging, biting, licking, barking, or nipping at your clothes, it is important that you **ignore him** and **walk away**. *Paying attention to your puppy when he is demanding your attention is not a good idea.*

Keep your puppy close to you when working with this behaviour. Put your puppy on a leash so you will have more control. You may find it easier at times to step on the leash when he is acting out. This will protect you or others and allow you to ignore him when necessary. When you step on the leash, allow your puppy enough room (about two to three feet from the clip to your foot) so that he does not feel pinned down. If he acts in a way that warrants stepping on the leash, **look away and wait out his demanding and excitable behaviour**. **It is important that your puppy not be able to hurt you** by jumping up, grabbing your clothing, or nipping at your skin.

The more opportunities you have to work with this behaviour, the faster it will stop. Here are some basic guidelines to help you teach your puppy self-control and good manners:

- ✓ Never allow your puppy to initiate play with you or other family members. You or the other family members should always be the ones to start play, not your puppy. However, if your puppy brings you a toy and you have the time to play with him, ask him to sit and then play with him as a reward.
- ✓ You should decide when playtime is over, not your puppy. Keep play sessions short (about five minutes) so that you can be the one to decide when playtime is over.
- ✓ Offer petting, scratching, and other forms of attention only to quiet puppies. Any rambunctious behaviours are ignored.

If the puppy jumps up, **cross your arms over your chest** to protect your face, arms, and fingers, **turn your back on the puppy**, and **take a step forward**. If he jumps up again, step on the leash to make sure he cannot hurt you, and take all your attention away from him.

Take all attention away from your puppy if he tries to demand your attention. This includes nudging your arm with his nose or barking at you for attention. **Do not say a word**. **Look away**, **stand up**, and **walk away** from him. When your puppy is settled and quiet, walk over to him, softly pet him, and say "Yes, good, quiet." If he jumps up on you, walk away and try again when he is lying quietly. When he accepts the quiet petting, **mark** the quiet behaviour with "Yes, good, quiet," and **reward** him with a soft, long pet. This will send a clear message to him that he will get your attention and rewards when he is quiet.

When it is time to feed the puppy, ask him for a *sit* before offering the meal. If he jumps up, do not feed him. Place the meal in the refrigerator or in a cabinet and walk away. Wait a minute or two for him to calm down and repeat the exercise. Once he remains seated for just a few seconds, quickly place the food dish on the floor and **release** him from the *sit*

position. This will help teach him patience and self-control. If you are not successful after trying a couple of times, feed your puppy his normal meal. Set aside time to work on the *sit* cue with him before trying this exercise again. (If the puppy is not proficient with the *sit* cue, ask one of our nurses (Patient Behaviour Advocate) for the hand out on teaching *sit*.)

A demanding puppy becomes a demanding dog, and demanding dogs can become aggressive dogs quickly. When you take all energy and attention away from this demanding and excitable behaviour, it will diminish. If your puppy is so out of control you cannot manage him, put him in his crate for a time-out. This gives him some time to calm down and may be necessary for only a few minutes. If you put him in his crate, do not open the door of the crate when he is barking. Opening the crate when your puppy is barking means he is making demands and training you.

Remember, everything should be done when *you* say, not when your puppy demands it. After consistently working with him for a few weeks, you should begin to notice a change in his behaviour.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us