

# Sit Happens

Tips and Techniques for Training Your Pet with Trudi Thorpe



Photo by Animax

Hi Trudi.

We have a really annoying, ongoing problem with our puppy – he jumps up on me, my husband and my children (4 and 6 years old), all the time. We've tried pushing him down and saying 'no', but nothing seems to work. In fact, the more we do this, the more he seems to get excited and then often, he grabs hold of our hands or our clothes with his mouth. The kids are starting to become afraid of him and often push him away and then run through the house, which as you can imagine, only serves to engage him in a game of chasing. He is a 5 month old cavoodle. What would you suggest we try?

Samantha Conner

Hi Samantha.

The behaviours that you describe although annoying are relatively common and easy to modify if the whole family can work together in a consistent manner. Puppies learn very early on that jumping up can be very rewarding. Any behaviours that they find rewarding will encourage them to repeat the behaviour and any behaviours they don't will tend to diminish. Sometimes we inadvertently encourage our puppies to jump up on us by doing things such as picking them up when they jump on us, or using inviting body language such as leaning over them to say hello. Pushing your puppy down only further encourages him to jump straight back up because you are interacting with him physically and he finds it rewarding. Moving about in an animated fashion turns the whole scenario into a game hence the mouthing of your hands and your clothes and the kids running away from him takes the game to a whole new level encouraging him to chase after them. Your puppy wants your attention and by giving him the opportunity to rehearse all of the above behaviours, further encourages him to continue to jump, mouth and chase.

Based on the understanding that dogs will do whatever works for them, the basis for teaching your puppy the appropriate way to greet you is to reward the good and ignore the bad. He wants your attention, so if he is completely ignored when he jumps up, and greeted warmly when he has four paws on the floor, he learns very quickly that jumping just doesn't work for him and the behaviour will diminish. Turn away from him and stand very still when he is jumping. If you find that each time you turn away from him, he simply follows you around, stand and face a wall with your back to him. In particular, avoid eye contact as this is often interpreted by your puppy as attention. The moment he stops jumping, calmly reward him. Repeat this every single time you greet him, and it won't be long before he understands. By not engaging him in physical interaction, ie pushing him down with your hands, there is no reason for him to mouth you. You need to be absolutely consistent in your approach to modifying his jumping behaviour and everyone in the family needs to practice the same methods. When it comes to the kids, the best way is to tell them to stand very still and act like a tree. Get them to cross their arms, keep their feet still and look at the sky. Reward the puppy when he stops jumping. Explain that running away from him will only make him chase

them. Ideally, it is best that there is an adult supervising the kids' interactions with the puppy to start. Keeping all greetings low key and to a minimum will also greatly assist in balancing your puppy's excitement levels.

**Trudi Thorpe** runs a dog behaviour and training company, dogLOGIC, based in Sydney. As Trudi says "DOGS, DOGS, DOGS... A childhood obsession that I never grew out of." She devises and implements individual behavioural strategies and obedience techniques based on 18 years of studying dog problems and problem dogs.

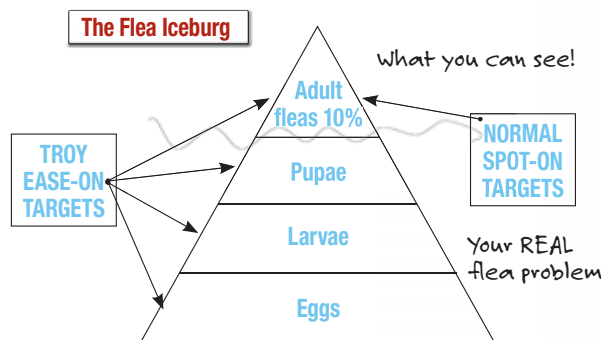
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