

What does jumpy/mouthy/mounting mean?

It means that your dog likes to put his front paws on people in an attempt to get attention or greet. Your dog may also like to put his mouth on people or clothing. Usually, this mouthing doesn't hurt, but sometimes it does – it depends on the dog and his excitement level. Some dogs may also attempt to mount people or other dogs when they get excited or stressed. None of these are “dominance” related behaviors; they are simply normal canine responses to excitement, energy or stress.

What should I do when my dog starts jumping/mouthing/mounting?

- **Step on the leash.** Have your dog stand with the leash clipped to his collar. Drop the leash on the floor right in front of your dog and put a piece of colored tape at the spot where the leash naturally hits the floor. Stepping on this spot with the ball of your foot will prevent your dog from jumping without pulling his neck to the ground. Use this technique when you answer the door or when you meet strangers on the street.
- **Give your dog an alternative.** Most dogs have specific times that they get excited and tend to jump/mouth/mount. For example, if you know your dog becomes mouthy when you get home from work at the end of the day, put a basket of toys near the front door. When your dog approaches to greet you, put one of the toys in your dog's mouth or toss a toy for your dog to pick-up.
- **Redirect your dog.** If your dog starts mounting, redirect him to more appropriate behavior by tossing a toy, playing a game, giving him a chewie, or asking him to perform some previously learned basic obedience skills or tricks that he enjoys (sit, down, shake, etc.).
- **Cool-Down.** If your dog is getting too excited, mark the undesirable behavior with a cheerful “Oops!” and provide a brief (30 second) cool-down period so he can regain control of himself in a safe and calm environment. The brief cool-down can be achieved by putting him in a crate, turning your back, stepping on leash, tethering, or putting him in dog-proof room. By marking the behavior (“Oops!”), your dog will learn faster that the timeout is happening because of his behavior. When you release him, be prepared with a toy to stuff in his mouth and have a treat ready to reward an auto-sit. If he jumps/mouths/mounts, repeat the cool-down.

How do I train my dog to not jump/mouth/mount?

- **Teach an Auto-Sit.** Lure your dog into a sit with a treat five times. Then wait for him to offer a sit without saying anything. Reward by tossing a treat to the side so that he has to get up to get it. When he starts to auto-sit, stop luring. Practice in different locations and with different people.
- **Reward good behavior.** When your dog makes the choice of not jumping, mouthing or mounting in situations where he normally would, calmly say “Good” and have a playtime or feed a piece of kibble / treat.
- **Teach Tug (for mouthing).** Get a braided fleece tug toy. Keep it out of sight most of the time, and when you are ready to train, bring it out. Ask or wait for a sit (see Auto-Sit above) before offering the toy to your dog. Play tug. If/when his teeth make contact with your skin, say “ouch!” Immediately stop tugging on the toy, but do not release it. Just keep your hands still and zip your lips. As soon as he drops it, say “Good dog!” and start playing again. If/when he puts his mouth on you three times, the tug toy goes away and all play stops.

What are some general recommendations for excitability?

- **Increase his exercise.** Play fetch in a fenced-in backyard or take your dog to doggie daycare to wear him out. Get a flirt pole and attach a toy to the end of it and let your dog chase it.
- **Brain games.** Feed him out of a Kibble Nibble, KONG or other puzzle toy.
- **Diet affects behavior.** There are lots of resources that can help you figure out the best food for your dog. Looking for a great place to start? Check out http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/topics/dog_food.html
- **Be aware of your own actions.** Avoid any sort of hand games or wrestling type games. These games teach your dog that your body is a toy, and that's not helpful for dogs who already like to put their mouth on people. Also, avoid overly-excited talking and excessive gestures that are likely to raise his excitement level.