

Dog training: Greeting people politely

Firstly - the difficult part - on returning home, instruct your dog to [sit](#) (or lie down) on its mat, and delay greeting the dog until it does so. If good Rover sits, gently praise the dog to excess. If bad Rover does not sit, keep trying until he does so. Do what it takes - take hold of the dog's [collar](#) and keep hold until the dog complies. This is no more difficult than routinely dealing with the dog in everyday distracting situations. Only this time, you shall persevere, and eventually, your dog will sit and be suitably praised for its trouble. Other reprimands and [punishments](#) are neither necessary nor advisable. Your dog will soon learn he has to sit before you will deign to say hello. Indeed, as soon as your dog sits, greet it with gentle stroking, calm but profuse [praise](#) and a couple of food treats.

Now comes the easy part. Once your dog's exuberance has waned following the customary exultation of sniffs, [licks](#), wags and wiggles, slip out of the house by the back door, 'return home' via the front door once more and request Rover to go to the appropriate place and assume the appropriate position, i.e., to sit on his mat. This time, however, it will be much, much easier to get Rover to sit. Rover is not nearly as excited by your return, because he has only just greeted you seconds beforehand. After greeting your dog for the second time, leave and repeat the procedure a third time, and then once more and so on. Rover's performance will improve with each repeated re-entry.

With repeated exposures to the same stimulus complex (owner at front door), your dog will become less and less excited and therefore he will become progressively easier to control. It will become easier and easier to get your dog to sit with subsequent repetitions. Using troubleshooting procedures, the initial improvement is dramatic. Once Rover's performance is impeccable, repeat the departure/arrival sequence another half a dozen or so times in order to leave an utterly indelible impression on your dog's brain - that you are thoroughly pleased and overjoyed with your dog's newly learned (newly taught) social etiquette and mannerly greetings.

Troubleshooting is especially important for dogs which are kept outside for any reason. An outdoors dog will generally go bonkers when it comes inside. This, of course, is often a primary reason why the dog was relegated outdoors in the first place. A vicious circle quickly develops. The more the dog is kept outside, the greater its exuberance and the worse its [behavior](#) whenever it comes indoors. Eventually, the dog will be kept outdoors permanently. Whether you want the dog to be able to come indoors in a mannerly fashion or whether you want to be able to venture into your own backyard without being blitzed by Bozo, the troubleshooting procedures are similar.

Invite your dog indoors and instruct him to "[Settle Down](#) and Shush." Once the dog has calmed down, instruct him to go "Outside" again. Have the dog come inside and go outside several times in a row. Not only does this procedure improve the dog's demeanor and deportment on each successive ingress, but also it increases the dog's eagerness for each successive egress. The dog learns to come inside like a civilized canine, and it learns that having to go outside does not necessarily mean it will be left out in the cold 'till the ends of time. When your dog eventually enters in an impeccable, orderly fashion, let it stay awhile.

For dogs living permanently outdoors, go out to greet the dog several times in a row. The first visit will be a disaster. The second will be merely unpleasant. The third will be pretty good, and

on the fourth and subsequent visits, the dog will be [well behaved](#). So if the dog's so perfect, why not bring him indoors for company, comfort and protection? Yea owner!

Training your dog to jump on request

Some owners feel there are times when it is both appropriate and enjoyable for their dog to greet them by jumping-up. To avoid confusion, always herald these occasions with a suitable request, e.g., "Give us a Hug." Never allow the dog to jump-up unless on invitation. When returning home, first have the dog greet you in a calm, controlled [stay](#), and then once you have closed the front door or changed into dog-jumping clothes, tell the dog to give you a hug. Thus, the previous problem - joyful jumping - becomes the reward for not jumping-up during the initial greeting.

Training your dog to greet visitors politely

Invite 20 friends over, ostensibly to watch a football game on the television but in reality, for a Rover-training extravaganza. When Patrick arrives, it is possible to direct 110% of your attention towards your dog, because there is no hurry to open the door - it's a set-up, and anyway, it's only Patrick! It doesn't matter how long it takes to get your dog to sit or [lie-down](#). Take encouragement. The first time will be the hardest, and from then on, it will be as easy as teaching a possum to play dead. Once the dog is sitting (or lying) on its mat, instruct Patrick to enter. (The door is closed but unlocked, and so there is no need to divert attention from your dog.) Continually praise your dog all the time it remains sitting on its mat. Pat may offer a hand for your dog to sniff and a [food treat](#) for your dog to eat. Tell Pat to go and sit down in the living room, and then, instruct Rover to say hello. Pat may pat the pooch and allow it to perform the requisite nose-scan of all the olfactory goodies that normally reside on visitors' clothing (the intoxicating smell of Pat's cute [Pyrenees](#)) and on the undersoles of their shoes (the remains of that otherwise mighty mound of [Corgi](#) copros, which Pat squished on the corner of Folker and 46th).

Once Rover has settled down and got used to Pat's presence, Pat should make a surreptitious exit and then ring the doorbell once more. Characteristically, the dog will make a wild and woolly rush to the door with all the uncontrolled exuberance of before, only to calm down a mite when it realizes it is only Pat again. Since the dog is calmer, it is more easily and quickly controlled. Pat enters, gives the dog a treat and then sits down to allow the dog a cursory olfactory investigation. This time your dog will not be quite as intent on nose-vacuuming Pat's pants and soles but will settle down more quickly. Exit Pat stage right, only to ring the doorbell again. A rapid rush by Rover, but then those familiar footsteps, the rhythm of the ring, the cadence of the clapper, a quick sniff at the bottom of the door, a glimpse of Pat's ugly mug and the sober realization - "Pat! Are you coming or going?" Since Patrick's presence is now no more distracting than a spare pair of mukluks, it is easy to control Rover and to get him to sit-stay on the mat. Rover gets it right, and so, Rover gets [rewarded](#). Therefore Rover will be more likely to get it right in the future. Pat should leave and return a few more times for good luck, then settle down to warm up the TV and drink down some cold beers (to empty cans for booby traps). Have Pat perform a total of 10 re-entries during the course of the football game. (Keep the beers on the porch as an incentive for visitors to make repeated trips outdoors.)

Now it is time to call Susan and repeat the entire multiple-entry program. And then with Tammy, and then Stacie, et alia, until the whole crew is assembled to watch the game on the box. Within just a single session of concentrated greeting (some 200 greetings with 20 people in under four hours), Rover will learn how to greet visitors at the front door, and you will learn how to control your dog, such that things will be much easier on Monday morning with real visitors from back East. (Or from out West. It works just as well with visitors from all points of

departure.) It may be necessary to occasionally touch-up training in the future. If your dog molests any visitors, just ask them to leave and come back in again.

Training game: Strangers on the street

A similar troubleshooting ploy may be designed to teach your dog how to appropriately greet strangers on the street. Again, it is difficult to train your dog effectively during the course of everyday living, e.g., when rushing to post a letter. Instead, at half-time in the ballgame, supply each of your 20 visitors with [treats](#) for the dog and then turf them out on the streets with instructions to space out and walk clockwise around the block. You and your dog can set off in a counter-clockwise direction. When meeting each person, request your dog to sit. If the dog sits, praise the good critter, and maybe offer a treat. Also, the ersatz strangers may praise your dog and gently pet it. If your dog jumps-up, instructively reprimand him - "SIT!" Your dog has a choice: 1) sit and receive praise, pats and treats or 2) jump-up and be reprimanded, yet have to sit anyway, i.e., Hobson's choice. Your dog will happily elect to sit.

The first lap around the block often resembles a post-touchdown pantomime with the dog trying to high-five (or high-four-forepaw) each person it encounters. However, by only the second or third lap, your dog begins to get the idea how to greet people. By the fourth or fifth lap, the dog is perfect.

Try this [exercise](#) with a couple of groups of people. In this fashion, it is possible to practice a hundred or so street encounters within the half-hour. Your dog has been given the opportunity to master the required domestic social graces when meeting strangers, so that when on the way to post a letter, you will have better control when meeting real strangers.

Excerpted from How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks, by Ian Dunbar.

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