

## **Jumping and Digging and Chewing, Oh My!**

### **Jumpin' Jack Flash**

When I teach group classes for pet dogs, I hand out index cards the first night and ask my students to write down three behavior problems they'd like to see addressed. Inevitably, the answer that shows up most often is jumping up on people. Wolfdogs are as prone to this behavior as any other canine; but when a wolfdog jumps on someone, the problem can have more serious repercussions. Airborne wolfdogs can knock children (and small adults) flat without meaning to. Of course, so can many large canines. But while parents might be understanding about a Lassie look-alike knocking their child down in good-natured play, with wolfdogs, the unfortunate translation might be, "That animal mauled my child." While the animal in question may have done nothing wrong, these situations inevitably end badly for the four-legged defendant.

A wolfdog who is happy to see you can tear clothing and even skin. Being greeted shouldn't mean giving blood! On a less dramatic note, you might not mind your wolfdog jumping up on you when the weather is dry and you're in your "dog clothes." But what about when it's been raining, your yard is one big mud puddle, and you've just come home from a big night out? You sure don't need Timber's designer touch improving your wardrobe. Unless, of course, you prefer that chic pawprint pattern...

The reason canines jump on us in the first place is simple. They want our attention. Many people respond by pushing the offender

## *Wolfdogs A-Z*

off, while saying something like, “No! Get Down!” Let’s examine that approach. Timber wanted to be spoken to and interacted with, so he jumped up. The person then not only spoke to him, but played this great pushing game every time he bounced back up. Hmm, do *you* think he’s likely to do it again? Other non-effective methods include a knee to the chest or squeezing the poor woofers’ paws. Those methods have something in common: They’re unnecessary, not very pleasant for your wolfdog, and can actually be dangerous. I know of one woman whose exuberant German Shepherd mix came flying through the air to greet her. She raised her knee gently to his chest, as she had done so many times before. But this time, thanks to the dog’s momentum, she actually broke two of his ribs. There are better ways. (Note: The fact that she’d done it “many times before” should have told her the method wasn’t working.)



*A full-bodied jump can knock down a child or small adult.*



*If safe, getting down to lupine level can make for a pleasant greeting.*

## *Jumping and...*

### Ignore the Boor

Here's how to stop jumping up quickly, painlessly and effectively:

Part One: When your wolfdog jumps up, fold your arms in front of you and make a quarter turn to the side. Look slightly up and away from him, as though you're snubbing him. Timber's efforts are now being answered by you turning into a statue. Not very interesting for him, is it. Some wolfdogs will, at this point, walk around in front of you. If yours does, just turn away again. Most will not keep this up for long. Whether he continues to jump or not, employ the second part of this plan, which is...

Part Two: Give him an alternate behavior to perform, then reward for it. If your wolfdog already knows Sit, ask him to do so. As soon as his rear hits the floor, reward with *calm* praise and petting, and if you'd like, a treat. If he jumps up again, turn back into a statue, then repeat the request to sit. If your wolfdog does not know Sit, or is too caught up in Flying Wolfdog Mode, wait until all four paws are on the ground (you'll have to be quick, this may last only a split-second), then reward. Repeat as many times as necessary. Remember, canines do what works for them, and wolfdogs are far from stupid. If jumping on you gets them nothing, but four-on-the-floor or sitting gets them what they want, they're going to choose the behavior which is rewarded.

Once your wolfdog understands the proper way to get your attention, set him up. Go out the front door, wait a few minutes, then come back in. If it seems your companion's lessons have fled his brain, begin again. Be patient. Once he's reliably *not* jumping, go back out the door and try again. Once he's consistently greeting you calmly without jumping, have someone else practice coming in the front door. Set that lovable bundle of