



Training Your Dog For Visitors

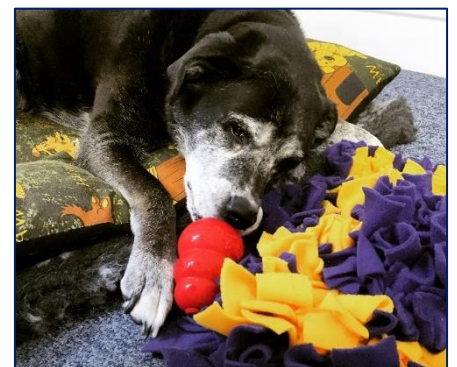
Lots of dogs get nervous and/or excited when they hear the sound of the doorbell or a knock at the door, and this can make it difficult to welcome guests into your home! To make things easier and safer, you can teach your dog to run to their bed when they hear the knock or doorbell, and quietly wait there until your visitors are settled. While you are doing this training it would be a good idea to put a sign on your door asking people not to knock or ring the doorbell but to phone you from outside instead, so that 'real' guests don't disrupt your training!

Teach your dog not to react to the knock or doorbell

- 🐾 Start by knocking on hard surfaces at home and ignoring your dog's response (you can use a mobile phone to recreate the sound of a doorbell for the same purpose). If your dog shows a strong reaction, for example barking or rushing to the door, then make the sound quieter. Gradually increase the volume until your dog is ignoring reasonably loud knocks and doorbells.
- 🐾 Ask a helper to go out and approach the front door to knock or ring the bell while you remain inside with your dog. Start by having the helper knock or ring just once and ignore your dog completely however they respond. You can throw them a treat reward once they're quiet and calm.
- 🐾 Gradually increase the number and volume of the knocks/rings until your dog is ignoring them completely. They have now become meaningless as they no longer result in anyone coming in at all.

Teach your dog to respond differently

- 🐾 Have your helper approach and knock/ring the door again. When this happens encourage your dog to run to their bed, ideally placed in a room where visitors wouldn't enter, and reward them there by dropping a handful of treats onto their bed. Repeat this process several times during one session, but spend no longer than 10 minutes per session.
- 🐾 Over a number of sessions your dog will start to respond to the knock/bell by running to their bed with you. Encourage them to lead the way, turn it into a race to see who will get there first – it needs to be as fun as possible! When they get to their bed spend some time giving them a fuss and treats. The more you practise the better they will become. Eventually they will run to bed all by themselves and wait for you to bring them a treat.
- 🐾 When you get to this stage, start to give a longer lasting treat, such as a stuffed interactive feeder, that will take them a good while to enjoy. You can now introduce short periods of closing the door to this room so that they are left alone to enjoy their treat.



Try with real visitors

- * You are now ready to try with a real visitor! Once your dog has run to their bed when the visitor has knocked/rung the bell, close the door to this room so your dog can enjoy their long-lasting treat whilst you invite your visitor in and settle them down. Once your dog is calm, and if your visitors want to meet them, you can then let your dog in to meet your visitor if you feel it is safe to do so. You can now use this as your routine every time you have visitors - and take the note off your door!
- * It's a good idea to have a long-lasting tasty treat ready prepared in your fridge in case you are surprised by unplanned visitors. Preparation and practise make perfect!

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The advice contained in this handout is of a general nature and is no substitute for specific behavioural or veterinary advice.