Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor has explained, your new pet has a lot of energy! This energy is sometimes displayed by the dog jumping up on people and putting his/her mouth on them in a friendly manner. Dogs who display this behavior are generally trying to play, saying hello or trying to get attention.

By following the recommendations below, you will be able to teach your new family member how to play and greet people politely!

ENCOURAGE your dog to play and greet politely. Make sure to praise the behavior you want! Often times when the dog is jumping and mouthing, they are getting lots of attention, even if it is negative attention. This is exactly what they want! When a dog is being polite and calm, often times that behavior is accidentally not acknowledged and the dog quickly learns that jumping and mouthing is more rewarding for them than calm behavior.

- Teach your new dog to play fetch with a toy. A dog who has a toy in their mouth to greet and when excited cannot use their mouth in inappropriate ways.
- Teach your dog that you will not greet him until he has four paws on the ground. Make sure to praise and pet as SOON as four paws are on the ground.
- Whenever you do things that you notice brings on the mouthy or jumping behavior, offer your dog a favorite toy. Make it more interesting by tossing the toy away from you and having him bring it back.
- Make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise, both mental and physical!

DISCOURAGE inappropriate jumping and mouthing behavior. The best way to extinguish this behavior is to get ahead of it the ways listed above but sometimes they are just quicker than we are! If your dog does jump and/or mouth...

- Do not engage with the dog. Remember, any form of attention at all can be rewarding to the dog and feeds the behavior.
  - Turn your back and become a statue with your arms folded, your eyes averted from the dog and body still.
o If that doesn’t work, leave the room and close a door between you and the dog for a minute or so. This is a clear marker that the behavior displayed makes all attention, rewards and praise go away.

• Avoid encouraging the dog to mouth and jump by playing wrestling games with your dog. While this is fun for both of you, during the learning stage, this encourages the dog to jump and mouth.

Please note that frequently recommended methods to stop jumpy/mouthy behavior such as kneeling the dog, grasping the dogs feet and squeezing, grasping the dog’s muzzle or scruff, often makes the behavior worse. Some dogs misinterpret the behaviors as play, others get frustrated and nippy and some dogs even become fearful of their handlers. As a result, the mouthy/jumpy behavior may get worse and you may even get new issues to deal with as well.

If you are having issues curbing your pup’s mouthy/jumping behavior, please contact our trainer at JGibson@adltexas.org for more tips and information!

*Special thanks to the center for shelter dogs for this resource.