

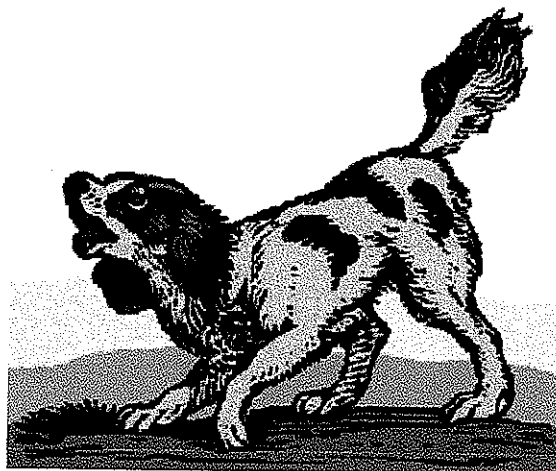
## Resource Room

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### OVER EXUBERANT GREETINGS - A client letter and reply

Dear Pet Behavior Solutions:

My 14-month-old English Springer Spaniel has begun exhibiting a very annoying behavior. He is very excited when I come home. He begins jumping, barking, and leaping around. He also nips me, usually on my upper thigh or abdomen, deliberately. This is the only aggressive behavior he displays. I believe this is misdirected exuberance. When I get home, we go immediately into the yard so he and my other dogs have the space to express their happiness safely. I kneel down, pet him, and tell him to calm down, but his hyper behavior starts up again the minute I stand up. Any suggestions?



Debbie

Dear Debbie:

*Thank you for your excellent question! Over-exuberant greeting is an extremely common occurrence with dogs. Many dogs greet their owners by jumping and barking, and some become so over-stimulated that they nip. In working with this issue, there are two key points to consider. First, we want to avoid doing anything that will add to the dog's stimulation. This includes anything from greeting your puppy as excitedly as he greets you to scolding, punishing, or otherwise actively attempting to control or suppress his behavior. Second, your dog should learn to handle his excitement and over-stimulation in an appropriate manner. Therefore, we must avoid attempting to actively calm the dog, verbally or physically.*

*Your goal in solving this issue is to channel the dog's energy and redirect his behavior. One way to achieve this goal is to change the sequence of behaviors, or chain of events, that occurs upon your arrival home. One sequence you might choose is to have your dog "burn off" excess energy in a more appropriate manner than jumping up and biting you. If your dog likes toys, you can begin this sequence by having a toy ready for him when you enter your home. This will allow him to express his exuberance by playing. Repetition is the key to firmly establishing this new habit. If you give him a toy every time you enter the home, eventually, he will learn to seek a toy when he becomes excited.*

*Another method to achieve the goal is to completely avoid all interaction with your dog (taking care to avoid flying teeth) until he calms down enough to offer a more appropriate behavior (e.g., sit or down). Keep in mind that this method may take a little longer. After all, the dog must learn to calm down in order to gain your attention. While your dog is learning something new, you can expect him to initially become more persistent in those behaviors that gained your attention in the past. It is highly likely that the jumping, barking, and nipping will increase before the dog decides to learn something new. Determination is essential with this method; you must hang in there. Your dog will try something new when he realizes that the over-exuberant behaviors really won't work anymore.*

*Patience, persistence, and consistency are the keys to successfully resolving over-exuberant greetings!*

Good Luck!

Pet Behavior Solutions