

# *Pawsitive Results Critter Academy*

*Where people learn to lead...and pets love to follow!*

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## **Solving Problem Behavior**

1. **Identify the behavior you don't like.** Be specific. Describing your dog as "too hyper" or your parrot as "stubborn" isn't helpful. Instead, try statements like, "My dog jumps on people" or "My parrot won't step up."
2. **Determine what you want your dog to do instead.** It's not enough to say you want the problem behavior to stop. Your pet could stop that behavior and choose to do something even worse! Save yourself time – and your pet confusion – by defining what you want your pet to do in this situation. For example, if your dog jumps on people, you might decide you want your dog to sit instead. If your parrot bites when you feed him, you could have him go to and stay on a perch away from the food dish while you put in the food.
3. **Manage the situation so the unwanted behavior becomes unreinforcing or impossible.** This step is critical to the process. Every time your pet successfully does the unwanted behavior, it is more likely to occur again. Your job as trainer is to figure out what triggers the behavior and *anticipate* it, to be *proactive* and prepared. If your dog jumps on people who come through the front door, plan ahead and put your dog on leash before letting guests in. If your parrot sometimes bites guests, do not allow guests to interact with him until you have taught him better ways to interact with guests. When you don't have time to work on the behavior, keep your pet out of the problem situation.
4. **Train the new, preferred behavior.** Make sure to reinforce every correct repetition at first. When dealing with problem behavior, the best reinforcer is always the payoff the dog was getting from the unwanted behavior. The dog who jumps and the parrot who screams are probably doing it to get attention. So, giving your dog attention for sitting and your parrot attention for whistling softly may be a better reward than a food treat. Be sure to give your pet **what he wants** in exchange for doing what you want!

**Note that I never mentioned physically correcting the problem behavior. It simply isn't necessary to yell, spray, collar pop, alpha roll, etc. Be proactive, not reactive. Don't set up an adversarial relationship. Find a solution that is mutually rewarding!**