

Fear or Aggression with House Guests

Your dog may never learn to be calm when strangers enter the house. However, you can use the following steps to help them get used to new people more quickly. The idea behind these steps is to give them guidance in calming down and to associate positive things with the presence of people in the house.

Types of Aggression

Make sure your guests don't use gestures and body language that will put your dog on the defensive and fearful. Guests should avoid:

- o Direct eye contact
- o Leaning over the dog
- o Coming at the dog directly – instead they should avert their gaze, approach the dog sideways. Ideally they should avoid approaching the dog at all until they are feeling comfortable with them.
- o Reaching over the top of or patting the dog's head
- o Coming up behind the dog without warning
- o Hugging or restraining the dog
- o Reaching into the dog's "safe" space (bed, crate)
- o Sudden hand movements or loud noises

Keep in mind that kids may not be able to comply with these restrictions. If kids coming to your house they tend to react to a dog with shrieking and flailing, it might be better to go straight to putting your dog behind a baby gate as described below. The same is true for any guests who can't follow the protocol.

Once your dog calms down, he can come out from behind the baby gate, ask your dog to sit or hand target ("touch") and give him a treat when he complies. Make sure to NOT treat your dog when he's barking or behaving anxiously.

If your dog is too revved up to respond and is not calming down, put him back behind the baby gate and have everyone ignore him until he calms down.

Another option is to distract the dog away from his defensive/barking behavior by calling him to you and giving him a long lasting chew item behind a baby gate. This allows him to be safely separated from guests while also pairing the separation and guests with a high value food item.

For dogs that are fearful or aggressive towards people, consider training your dog to wear a basket muzzle. Basket muzzles still allow your dog to eat, drink, receive treats, bark, and pant normally while protecting him and others from any aggression.