

# PRO TRAINER TIPS FOR USING THE X-MAT TO TEACH DOGS NOT TO JUMP ON FURNITURE

*By Steven Appelbaum  
President, Animal Behavior College*

The X-Mat is most effective when used in conjunction with a behavior modification program that trains your dog where it's appropriate to lay down. Once your dog understands this concept, use the X-Mat to teach your pet which furniture is unacceptable to jump on.

Jumping on furniture can be handled by combining three training methods: consistency, counter-conditioning and X-Mat application.

## **Consistency**

Your dog must not be allowed to jump on the furniture. It can't be ok some times but not others. Prevent the dog from having unsupervised access to the furniture for a minimum of two months.

## **Counter conditioning**

Start off teaching your dog to go to a certain spot in the room whenever you are sitting on the furniture. It is important to create a spot that is comfortable and positive for the dog. Use a blanket or even a doggie bed and give your dog special treats or toys at the spot. For the first two months, the dog should be leashed to the spot to prevent her from wandering. Remember, make the spot comfortable and positive. This is where the dog goes *every time* you sit on the furniture. In addition to teaching the dog to associate positive things with being in her spot, it also teaches her to associate positive things with not jumping on the furniture.

During the second month, reinforce the idea that good things happen when she's not jumping on the furniture by taking the dog over to the furniture on a leash and praising her when she walks by without jumping. If she does jump, say "no" and gently guide her away using the leash. Then take her back to the furniture and praise her for not jumping. Do this specific exercise six or seven times every day for at least a month. After three months of consistent training, the X-Mat can be used in a highly effective fashion.

Safety note: Never leave your dog on a leash and collar unattended.

## **X-Mat Application**

Starting at the beginning of month four, place X-Mat on all items of furniture you wish to keep the dog from jumping on. Then give the dog an opportunity to jump on the furniture. If she does, the safe, but unpleasant sensation of jumping on the X-Mat will quickly deter this behavior. Continue to consistently reinforce all proper responses and leave the X-Mat on all furniture the dog has an opportunity to jump on for at least three weeks. If the dog no longer attempts to jump under any circumstances, you are ready to start eliminating the X-Mat.

Weaning the dog off the X-Mat is fairly simple. Take a piece of paper and cover the X-Mat completely. After another two weeks of no jumping on the furniture with the X Mat covered, leave the paper on the furniture and remove the X-Mat. After another two weeks of no jumping, cut the paper by one fifth and repeat that process at the rate of one fifth per week until the paper is gone. If the dog regresses at any time, move back one level in your training process.

Remember, consistency is extremely critical, as are patience and understanding.

*Steven Appelbaum is the President/Interim Director of Animal Behavior College, a school devoted to training the next generation of ABC Certified Dog Trainers. He is also the President of Animal Behavior and Training Associates, which from 1995 to 2004 was the largest independent dog training company in North America. He is the author of the "ABC Practical Guide to Dog Training" and a columnist for Off Lead Magazine.*