

**PAWS FOR THOUGHT**  
**June 2026**



**Look at me....Look at me!!**

It has been a long drive home from the office and you are looking forward to a relaxing evening, with your feet up and finally getting stuck into that new novel you bought over a month ago. You can anticipate the welcome you will receive long before you arrive, after all, you now share your life with a dog.

Dogs have a great way of making us feel welcome and we often overlook their jumping, leaping and whining simply because it makes us feel good. Problem is, it only makes us feel good for a very short time. It soon turns into a habit that we find annoying and even uncomfortable.

Attention seeking behaviors are high on the list of problems that dog owners seek help for. These behaviors are often disguised as cute and puppyish but make no mistake, those behaviors will repeat again and again if your dog feels there is a payoff. And payoff there is! The biggest jackpot of all...you.

Attention seeking is what dogs do best. It starts out early, as your puppy playfully paws at you to come and play. It slowly escalates into your dog demanding that you play. This demanding can come in the form of your dog constantly nudging your arm until you pat him, bringing toys and dropping them into your lap until you play and even worse, mouthing you until you stop what you are doing and realize what he has understood for a long time – he is the centre, its all about him.

When your puppy is small, these behaviors are seen as playful, and quite often we view them as signs of communication. Keep in mind that it is best to teach your pup, right from day one, that the best way to communicate with us is to act in a polite and mannerly fashion.

Attention seeking behaviors can be seen in many scenarios. Take, for example, the times when you are out walking your dog and you seem to spend a great deal of time untangling him from his lead. It seems that every time you walk down the street, that lead gets caught under his front leg. Is he clumsy, or just very clever? My vote is that he is very clever. Picture it...he puts his leg over his lead, you stop and adjust his

lead. While you are adjusting his lead, you invariably show him affection, talk to him or touch him. As you continue your walk, your attention may be diverted elsewhere and bingo...the foot goes over the lead and he has you right where he wants you. By simply untangling his leg in a calm manner, without a lot of attention, you should see this behaviour decrease.

Another very common attention seeking behavior is grabbing almost anything in your home – slippers, toilet paper, undies and running through the house with them. This usually starts off quite innocently. Your new pup may show a genuine curiosity for those slippers you have carelessly left lying around. As he starts to chew on one, you race towards him. This ends up in a chase game around the living room and now he fully understands how to get your attention. Keep in mind there is always a payoff for your dog when exhibiting these behaviors, and the payoff, again, is usually you.

How often have you sat at your computer to have your dog continually put his head in your lap, or have him continually bring you his toys. Or bark at you non stop. You start off full of resolve. This time you are not going to play his game but eventually you give in and ...well, you know the rest of the story.

One of the biggest problems, and an even bigger misconception, is that telling your dog to stop it or pushing them away, will lead to success. On the contrary, these type of actions lead to your dog being a continual pest. He is seeking attention, and he got it.

At this point he will take any type of attention, even if it is negative. Listen to your tone. Your words may be telling him to stop, but your tone does not reflect this.

The simplest and fastest way to get rid of any unwanted behaviors, especially those you find annoying, is to ignore your dog while he does them. When dog owners are faced with this information, they usually don't know what to do with it. Most feel a sense of guilt if they do not

show their dog attention when he asks for it. . Many may even go so far as to feel they are being mean if they ignore him for too long. Plus, it is a difficult task to carry out. Most of us would much rather be proactive, but it just does not work as well. It is a case of trying to raise a decent dog, one that people will enjoy being around.

If he pushes at your arm, ignore him. Will he go away quietly? Not at first. In fact the biggest obstacle for the dog owner is that the behavior will get worse before it gets better. The dog has been led to believe that this action got him a reward, got him what he wanted. The harder he pushes, surely you will eventually give in. This is especially true when someone has tried to ignore the behavior, only to give in. Now the dog knows if he pushes just a few more minutes, you will cave. Hang in there.

Eventually your dog will give up and go and settle on his mat. When he has settled for a while, get up and go over and pay him some attention. This will show him a new way to get what he wants and over time, settling down for the evening will be a common occurrence.

If you want to play with your dog, to throw his toy, make sure you elicit the game. If he brings the toy, ignore him and go about your business and after a few minutes, go over and take one of his toys and ask him to join you in the game.

What about those chase games in your living room? Attaching a small, lightweight house lead to your dogs collar, and keeping him supervised is your best bet. If he does manage to get into your sock drawer and race around with it while sporting a big grin, you can step on the lead and remove the object, while keeping the attention to a minimum. Not so much fun as the chase game, and as far as getting your attention, it didn't really work as well as he had hoped.

What if you don't mind that your dog is always vying for your attention? Keep in mind that this type of behavior can lead to more excessive nipping and even biting. Mouthing will escalate, barking will

become more demanding and your dog may find himself banished to other areas of the home because he has become a nuisance.

Teach him to behave appropriately and respectfully now and he will become the center of attention for much nicer reasons.