

**Getting on Furniture:** Many adopters do not want or allow dogs on the furniture and therefore the foster homes need to abide by the policy of not allowing the dogs on furniture to insure the dogs are suitable for the majority of adopters. One of the most common questions we get about from potential adopters is if the dog gets on furniture and if we have to say yes then most time they will pass on the dog due to this habit. I assure you for those adopters that don't mind for their pets to get on the furniture, they can teach their new dog that it's o.k. in about five seconds, whereas breaking a dog that isn't allowed on furniture can be a huge chore for the adopter.

Does this mean that fosters' owned dogs can't be allowed on furniture?, absolutely not. It is very common for one dog to be allowed to do something that another dog in the household isn't allowed to do, for instance many of us let our small breeds ride in the front seat but wouldn't dare let a giant breed ride up front due to the safety issues.

Once a dog forms the habit of getting up on furniture, change is difficult. If you want to keep your dogs off the furniture, your best bet is to start EVERY puppy and new dog in your home with "off the furniture" as the CONSISTENT rule. This means everyone in the family cooperates in keeping the dog off the furniture.

Do not leave the puppy or dog alone around furniture until training is complete. Someone must supervise, just as you will be doing anyway for housetraining and to teach the dog to chew only dog toys, not inappropriate items. Be gentle when removing the dog from furniture. It's best not to touch the dog at all, other than to lift a puppy or small dog and place gently on the floor. Puppies and small dogs can be injured by jumping off furniture.

For larger dogs that won't be harmed by getting down on their own, it is safer and more effective to lure and/or cue the dog to get off the furniture, and reward the dog for being back on the floor. People often arouse aggression in dogs by angrily ejecting them from furniture, which can both trigger defense drives in dogs and cause pain if the dog has an orthopedic problem. Orthopedic problems, both inherited and injury related are so common in dogs that this is a frequent cause of a dog reacting aggressively when forced to get up from a comfortable position and jump down to the floor.

For new adult dogs to your home, consider keeping a leash on when teaching the dog to get off furniture in order to have good control. A head halter is an additional safeguard if the dog shows any tendency to react defensively. Don't drag the dog off furniture with the leash. Induce the dog to return to the floor while you simply hold the leash, keeping it slack, with no tension pulling against the dog. The leash is simply a safety, "just in case." If the dog is off-leash, avoid grabbing the collar or otherwise physically forcing the dog. Either of those maneuvers can be dangerous.

Keep tempers out of it. You're teaching the dog what you DO want, not scolding or punishing for the behavior you do not want. This approach will lead to everyone in the family eventually being able to remind the dog about furniture when necessary without risking a defensive reaction from the dog.

Remember that you need a place for the dog to comfortably rest. You're teaching the dog WHERE to rest, not just WHERE NOT to rest. So have the comfy bed in place. The place for it is near the family so that obeying you does not place the dog in social isolation.

Reward the dog in the chosen resting place. Do this both when you have just cued the dog to go to the place, and also when you notice the dog has gone to that place without a cue. Use tiny treats, special chew toys, praise, petting, toys with food inside them, and other rewards your dog can enjoy while resting on the bed.

**Oops, A Habit:** If your foster dog has already formed the habit of getting up on furniture, changing that can be challenging. The dog will probably always have some tendency to get up on furniture when no one is around. You will need to keep the dog from having access to the furniture when you're not supervising, for quite some time, and possibly even for life.

Some people find a Scat Mat (you can buy it through pet catalogs) will keep a dog off the sofa. It gives the dog a shock. Obviously, you can't have the Scat Mat on the sofa if you're using it. Electric shock also carries the risk of "superstitious behavior," too, with a dog developing fear or aggression toward something experienced at the same time as the shock.

A plastic carpet runner--the kind intended to lie over the carpet to protect it, like at an open house when a house is for sale--can help. Turn the carpet runner upside down, so the plastic points that were intended to grip the carpet are instead pointed up, making an uncomfortable surface for a dog.