



**ICofA**

International Center of Anthrozoology

# Saying Hello to patients



Greetings are a very important part of every intervention with a dog. Sadly, it's also a moment during which interspecific miscommunication frequently occurs. The human wants to cuddle and pet the animal, while the dog at first feels overwhelmed or is interested in something else...

## So how do dogs say hello?

Usually through collecting information via scent. They thoroughly sniff at the human or dog they're interacting with to find out as much as possible about them. A lot of times the greeting is also accompanied by a great deal of emotions which are expressed through jumping, running and arousal.

During "saying hello", however, we usually prefer to avoid such actions.

## How can we teach the dog to greet in a way that it is more pleasant and easier for the human and the dog?

1. Allow the animal to collect scent signals - don't walk up to the person you want to interact with straight away! Stop a short distance (1-2 m) from them. Just a moment is enough for the dog to collect the necessary information and minimize its need to thoroughly sniff at the other person.
2. Teach your dog a method that will be to the liking of both the dog and the person it's interacting with.

Establishing a routine is very helpful; the same activity repeated multiple times becomes a habit and lowers the level of emotions the dog feels, so greeting humans becomes less exciting. Also, it may help your dog to greet humans more calmly and be more open to this form of interaction, not only during lessons but also in everyday life.

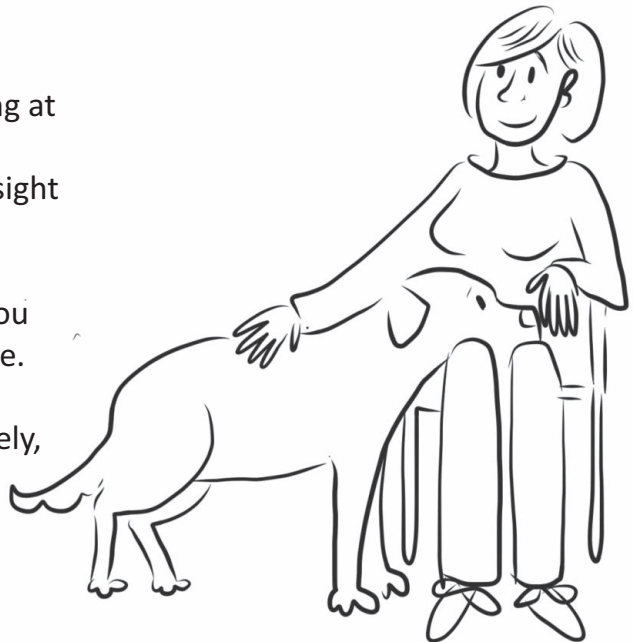
## Method 1: Greeting using the "nose target"

Teach the dog to touch a certain place with its nose. It can be, for example, an outstretched hand. Many people are partial to this method, because for them it's a sign of the dog's engagement in the greeting. For the dog, it's a simple and specific activity that they can do with ease. This method is great not only during lessons, but also at home, when interacting with guests!



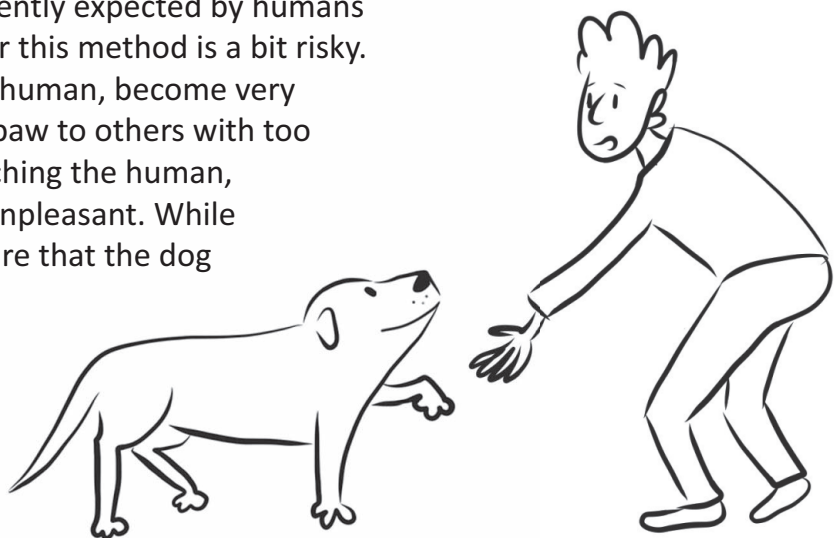
## Method 2: Hugging

A dog putting its head on your lap and looking at you with doe eyes like the Puss in Boots in “Shrek”? Whose heart wouldn’t melt at the sight of that! It’s good to teach your dog to lay its head on the target (for example on a small towel). That way you can choose the place you want for the dog to hug, wherever it might be. Using a small towel to signify the place is an added bonus when the animal drools profusely, preventing wet tokens of the dogs affection ending up on someone’s clothes.



## Method 3: Paw-giving

The dog giving its paw is frequently expected by humans when greeting with it, however this method is a bit risky. A lot of dogs, when greeting a human, become very emotional and may give their paw to others with too much force, accidentally scratching the human, making the greeting become unpleasant. While teaching this method, make sure that the dog gives his paw to others in a delicate manner.





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