

Rise and Shine!

Teaching a Deaf Dog to Wake up Gently

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There is a myth that deaf dogs are dangerous because they will bite when they are startled or woken up. Could this ever happen? Yes, it could. But it could also happen with a dog that can hear. Does it happen a lot? No. Most deaf dogs are no threat when startled. Can this scenario be prevented? Yes, definitely!

You can teach your deaf dog to wake up easily and happily. By teaching this skill to your new dog, you can prevent this issue from developing. Start training when your dog is awake and paying attention to you. Let your dog see you reach towards it. Touch your dog and then pop a wonderful treat into its mouth immediately. Don't wait to see what your dog will do. There should be no lag time. Just touch and pop the treat into its mouth. Make these really special treats. You want your dog to really look forward to being touched.

Repeat this pattern of touch and treat many times quickly in succession. Then touch your dog and pause for just a moment before giving the treat. The sequence will become – touch, dog looks expectantly for treat, and then feed. Don't pause too long, just long enough for your dog to show you that it knows the treat should come next. You are teaching your dog to associate your touch with a treat.

In future sessions, touch different parts of your dog's body. One touch = one treat. As your dog becomes more tolerant of you touching various parts of its body, sneak in a random touch now and then when your dog is not expecting it. Be ready with that treat immediately. Be sure to continue to use great treats every time you touch your dog. The more you reward the touching, the better your dog's response will be when it is surprised or woken up suddenly.

There may be times when your dog gets startled by a touch when you don't have a food treat immediately handy. Try to minimize these as much as you can in the beginning, but if it happens, be ready to reward your dog with something else it likes – a small game or lots of petting if your dog enjoys that. Being woken up or startled should always mean good stuff for your dog!



When your dog is sleeping, though, be respectful. Don't wake your dog up unless it's necessary. When you do need to wake your dog up, do it gently. Walk heavier as you approach your dog so it can begin to feel the vibrations through the floor. When you get close to your dog, blow on it gently to wake it up. If your dog is lying on a blanket, you can wiggle the edge of the blanket to gently shake it

awake. If your dog is still asleep, you can progress to brushing it gently with your hand. It is best to touch your dog on its body, not its face.

Be prepared for a startle if your dog is sleeping soundly. Startling is a normal response. Just make sure that you are quickly offering your dog something wonderful – a treat, or petting! Usually the dog will recover immediately once it sees or smells you, and when you offer something tasty to eat, it will forget all about being startled. Be aware that if your dog is blind-deaf, you may need to use your hands to steady it as it wakes up. It will not be able to see you nearby, so maintaining a firm but gentle touch on its body will let it know you are there, while you offer the food right near its nose.

You won't need to offer the treat forever, but it's a good idea to give a tasty treat every now and then as a reminder that unexpected touch is a good thing. The more you follow a startling touch with something wonderful (treat, playtime, petting), the happier your dog will be about it. It is important that you protect your dog from unexpected touches that could be unpleasant. If someone startles your dog, be ready to step in and make it a happy experience for it.

Remember that startling is a normal response. You will probably not ever get rid of it completely. But you can diminish how much the startle bothers your dog by rewarding frequently. And with lots of practice, you may notice your dog waking up easier and easier each time!

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