

Becoming Your Dog's Deluxe Elevator: Pick Up On Mastering the Lift

For most of our canine companions, life is best with all four paws planted firmly on the ground –or assuming the 'sphinx' pose, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice. These are the simple pleasures of a dog's life, where gravity is a friend and the earth is a constant companion.

Sometimes, it's necessary to divert from that rule. For example, when your pup bounces up on you, beloved owner, for a heartwarming hug or curling up for a cozy nap. And there are times when our dogs take brief flights of fancy. Perhaps it's a leap to catch that ball like a bird in full flight? However, while exhilarating, it isn't something we would recommend for pups watching their waistline.

But outside of these exceptional bounds, there are moments in the more pedestrian days of your 'average John Fido' when assistance from their human counterparts is necessary. Whether it's a lift onto the scales for a weight check, a hoist into the car for a road trip, or a gentle carry up the stairs to bed, these are the times when you become more than a companion. You just turned into their elevator.

This article zooms in on the surprisingly intricate art of picking up your dog. We wrote this article to explain how to weigh your dog using a human scale, but the technique applies in many situations.

While the little ones may be a cinch to scoop up, and the giant breeds might demand a scale of their own, the medium and large dogs occupy that middle ground – not too heavy to lift, yet not light enough to make it a breeze.

Beyond the mechanics of the lift, there's a hidden gem further down – a clever strategy to avoid lifting your dog altogether. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Step by step, we dive into the safe and comfortable ways to elevate your furry friend when needed.

Six Steps to Prevent Immediate Back Pain When Lifting Your Dog

Lifting your dog doesn't have to be a risky task. With the proper technique, you can ensure your furry friend's safety and spare yourself from injury. While your physiotherapist and chiropractor might miss seeing you, they'll appreciate your efforts to maintain your health. The following steps don't come with a guarantee, but by adhering to them, both you and your four-legged companion stand a better chance of avoiding physical or mental trauma.

Select the Appropriate Position - Be Flexible About It.

Finding the correct position to start from is crucial. Looming over your dog can be intimidating, as most dogs will perceive this as a dominant gesture. When you have already established a profound relationship with your precious pooch, there won't be a problem, but if you just adopted a dog, there might be a long way to go.

Approaching from behind or the front isn't wise either. You won't have enough reach to execute the lift when coming from the front and looming over your dog. Coming from behind is surprising and never a good idea as it will trigger the freeze, flight, or fight response.

The ideal approach is to stand beside your canine pal. Squat deeply next to your dog or kneel if squatting challenges your balance. It will give you that necessary stability and put you on the same level as your dog, which is less intimidating.

It's vital to be comfortable and calm during the process since dogs can sense tension and changes in your heart rate. Also, ensure you're on a stable, non-slip surface to avoid accidents. Remember, they have super'paw'ers and can notice the slightest stress or increased heart rate.

Proper Hand Placement – Precision Tools For A Reason

Once you've mentally prepared and found a comfortable spot, it's time to consider where to place your hands. It might seem logical to some to lift a dog by the ears and tail, but that's a significant no-go! It would be excruciating for the dog and certainly not something they'd easily forgive.

Similarly, placing your hands under the dog's belly and interlocking your fingers might seem practical, but it's not a good practice from a canine perspective. The area just behind the ribcage is delicate, supported only by the spine.

Picking up a dog under the armpits isn't ideal either, as dogs' front limbs are attached to the body with ligaments, not bones, making this area vulnerable. You also suspend the entire weight of the dog on those front limbs. Think about someone standing on the second floor and hoisting you up by your wrist. Pretty uncomfortable, don't you agree?

The best and safest way to lift your dog involves one hand under the chest, right at the front of the elbow joint, allowing the front paws to fold naturally. Your forearm will support the dog's chest. The other hand should support the hindquarters by wrapping around the back of the dog's knees. It distributes the dog's weight evenly and supports the front and back without putting stress on the middle part. It also creates a cradle-like environment for your dog to feel safe.

Lifting Mechanics -Elevate with Elegance

For small dogs, arm strength will generally suffice to lift them. The goal is to cradle the dog against your chest, offering full support and comfort. However, the technique is more complex regarding medium and larger breeds. Shift your weight slightly forward to counterbalance your dog's weight, which may pull you backward once they're airborne.

Keep your back straight, and lean forward from the hips to avoid lower back strain. Engaging your core muscles can also provide additional support. Always keep your dog close to your body, especially with larger breeds where the shift in the center of gravity is more pronounced.

Rely on the strength of your legs, not your back, to lift your dog. Straighten your legs as you stand up, ensuring your dog is secure, and brace yourself for any reactions from an anxious pet.

Remember that overweight dogs may not fold neatly due to size.

Secure Hold - Not A Death Trap

Pull your dog close to your chest to ensure even weight distribution and stability. You should maintain a firm but gentle grip on the chest and hindquarters — a secure but non-restrictive hold.

With skittish dogs, a firmer grip may be necessary to prevent them from wriggling free. If you cannot maintain your hold at any point, it's better to safely lower them back to the ground rather than risk an accidental drop.

With an insecure dog, you want to break the lifting process into small steps, like having your dog place two paws on your leg as a starting point. Remember, it's important not to express frustration; instead, focus on training your dog to become comfortable with the process to avoid creating a negative association.

Moving to the Destination – No Walk Of Shame

Once you've mastered the lift, please keep your dog close as you walk them to their destination. If it's your first time, try to be near the target location, like a scale, to minimize travel time with a nervous dog.

Incrementally increase the distance as you and your dog become more comfortable. Remember, moving the scale closer to the dog is usually easier than vice versa.

Putting Your Dog Back On The Ground - What Goes Up Must Come Down

When placing your dog back down, bend your knees to lower them gently onto their paws. Dropping to one knee can offer additional stability and prevent the temptation to bend at the waist, leading to losing balance and control. Even though it may trigger memories for some, staying focused on the task is critical.

You don't want to bend over and have Fido hovering in the abyss between your arms and the floor. It's the best way to lose your balance and speed up the descent of both of you.

Lower your dog to the ground slowly, avoiding a significant impact upon landing. An overweight dog's joints are already stressed enough without the surplus of impact control. If you're confident and your dog is amenable, you might let go a bit earlier to give them a short, controlled "flight" — but only slightly and safely, to be crystal clear.

Some Final Considerations for Safely Lifting Your Dog

Respect your dog's comfort zone. Not all dogs appreciate your plan to lift them, and respecting their personal space and comfort is essential. It's wise not to force the issue if your dog shows resistance or discomfort.

Pushing your dog beyond their limits can lead to a lack of trust or even injury, as some dogs may desperately try to escape a distressing situation.

Be mindful of your physical limitations. Lifting a more sizeable or heavier dog can pose significant risks to you and your pet. Understand your physical limitations; not everyone has the strength of a Schwarzenegger or Stallone.

Consider alternative methods when dealing with large breeds, such as a blanket lift with multiple people for safe transportation, particularly in emergencies.

If you don't like lifting your dog onto a scale, know there are other options. Many veterinary clinics, hospitals, and pet supply stores offer large, walk-on scales that eliminate the need for lifting altogether.

These are often freely available and can be safer for you and your dog. Mentioning that you heard about these services through Dogbesity.com could help raise awareness of healthy practices for pets.

Prioritize safety and well-being above all. If you have any concerns, don't hesitate to seek assistance. Regularly monitoring and managing your dog's weight will make lifting them safer and lighter.

You can contribute to the fight against canine obesity and help ensure more dogs live longer, healthier lives by sharing these tips and promoting Dogbesity.com's mission of #MoreHealthyDogs.

Sharing is caring, and knowledge is a powerful tool in creating a community dedicated to the health and happiness of our four-legged companions.