

TEACHING DOWN

Why train down?

Down is a great command for dogs that need to learn to relax in one place for long periods of time. It is also excellent for jumpy dogs because jumping up from a down is harder than from a sit. And, lying down can be helpful for big dogs because it makes them less intimidating when they meet children or people nervous around dogs.

How to train it.

Part A: Get the behavior

Step 1. *Show it.* Lure your dog into a down by putting the treat up to his nose and slowly moving the treat down to the ground. Keep the treat close to your dog's nose – if you move your hand down too quickly or too far away from his mouth he may give up and lose interest.

Step 2. *Pay it.* As soon as your dog's knees and elbows hit the ground, click and treat. Keep treating him to thank him for staying in the down. After a few seconds tell him, "Okay!" and encourage him to get up.

Part B: Add the cue (command)

Add the command one you know your dog will follow your lure into the down.

Step 1. *Say it.* Hold a treat in your hand. Tell your dog, "Down" in a cheerful tone of voice.

Step 2. *Show it.* Pause a second (one-one thousand), then lure your dog into a down by putting the treat up to his nose and slowly moving the treat down to the ground. Keep the treat close to your dog's nose – if you move your hand down too quickly or too far away from his mouth he may give up and lose interest.

Step 3. *Pay it.* As soon as your dog's knees and elbows hit the ground, click and treat. Keep treating him to thank him for staying in the down. After a few seconds tell him, "Okay!" and encourage him to get up. If he gets up before you release him, say, "Ah-ah" and ask him to lie back down. Release him more quickly this time, then keep practicing to work up to longer downs.

Step 4. *Repeat it.* Repeat steps 1-3 many times. When your dog gets into the down quickly, it is time to take the treat out of your hand and use the verbal cue alone. If your dog makes a mistake, first try luring without the treat. Only put the treat back in your hand if all else fails.

Training Tip: Only say the command once. Say it, then pause, then lure.

DOWN (CONTINUED)

Troubleshooting: If you can't quite get your dog to lie down, break the exercise into smaller steps. First click and treat him for following the treat to the ground, then for bending an elbow, then for bending both elbows. Make sure you click and treat liberally when you get a full down.

Troubleshooting: A good rule of thumb is to reward your dog whenever he naturally does something you are working on teaching him. So if you find him lying down, tell him, "Good down" and treat or pet him. That will also make your dog more likely to add lying around quietly to his list of hobbies.

When to practice.

- Before throwing a ball, Frisbee, rope-toy, etc.
- Before giving him a toy.
- Before putting the food bowl down.
- Before handing over a treat or chewie.
- Before opening a door.
- Before putting on a leash to go for a walk.
- Before taking off a leash at the park or beach.
- Before dishing out a belly rub or good ear scratch.
- Before hopping into or out of the car.
- Before allowing him onto the couch with you.