

GO TO YOUR MAT

How to train it.

Step 1. With a treat in your hand, tell your dog, "Go to your mat" in a cheerful tone of voice and point to his mat.

Step 2. Pause a second (one-one thousand), then lure your dog onto his mat by putting the treat up to his nose and slowly moving it over the mat. If you move your hand too quickly or too far away from his mouth he may give up and lose interest.

Step 3. As soon as your dog has four paws on the mat, treat.

Step 4. Tell your dog, "Down." Give the hand signal or lure it if your dog needs help. When he lies down, treat him. Continue to treat to keep your dog on the mat. After a few seconds, tell your dog, "Okay," and allow him to get up.

Repeat steps 1-4, gradually increasing the amount of time you ask him to stay on the mat.

What this is great for.

Working at your desk.

Watching TV.

Cooking in the kitchen.

When guests are visiting.

Anytime you need to get your dog out from underfoot.

When to practice.

Practice when you can pay attention. For example when you are answering easy emails, not when concentrating on a report due tomorrow. Or when preparing a sandwich, not trying a gourmet recipe for the first time. And TV commercials are a better practice time than engrossing movies.

Training Tip: As you increase the time your dog spends on his mat, throw in some shorter intervals to keep him motivated.

Training Tip: As your dog gets better and better, space out the treats he gets for staying on his mat. Eventually he will stay for no treats at all, but to keep the behavior strong, thank him occasionally for a job well done.

Troubleshooting: If your dog gets up before you release him immediately direct him back onto his mat and into a down. Don't treat him, but make the duration of this down short, so you can release him and repeat the exercise right away and reward for a successful result.