

Go to Your Mat (stationing)

How to train it.

Step 1. Put your mat in a place where you can walk around all sides. Walk with your dog toward the mat, motioning with the hand closest to your dog (don't use the words yet). As soon as your dog's feet are on the mat, mark with a "yes" or click, and reward your dog by putting a treat on the mat. Repeat several times.

Step 2. Add the words "go to your mat" just before you walk toward the mat. Repeat several times and from different directions. Remember to motion with your hand closest to your dog.

Step 3. Once your dog is happily moving to the mat and putting all four feet on it, you can add the down. Walk with your dog to the mat, mark with "yes" or click when all four feet are on the mat. Reward on the mat. THEN ask your dog to down. And reward the down. Repeat. After a dozen or more repetitions, your dog will start to anticipate the down and at that point, you can mark and treat for going on and laying down.

Step 4. Start the "send." After your dog is going to the mat and laying down happily, you can start to encourage your dog to move ahead of you toward the bed. Be sure to have your treats in your pouch or your dog might not leave your side. For the first three repetitions, you can use a treat on the mat to encourage your dog to move ahead of you. When you are working on the "send" go back to marking and rewarding the minute your dog's feet hit the mat.

Step 5. Once your dog is happily moving toward the mat from about 5 feet away, and laying down before being asked, you can start to extend the time your dog stays in the down. Reward frequently at first.

Where might you use this?

When 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, but to keep the behavior strong, praise him 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.