



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.

Easy Beginnings- Luring

Step 1. *Lure it.* Hold a treat in your hand between your thumb and your palm so it's not visible. Then, starting with your dog in a sit, lure your dog into a down by putting the treat up to his nose and slowly moving the treat down to the ground near your dog's front feet. 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. The hand signal for this is to hold your palm downward facing the floor. If you lower the treat too far from his front toes, he may get up. If so, start from the sit and try again lowering down closer to him.

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. If he gets up before you release him ask him to lie back down. Release him more quickly this time, then keep practicing working up to longer downs by increasing the time between treats. (See the Stay handout.)

Step 3. *Repeat it.* Repeat steps 1-2 several more times. When your dog gets into the down quickly it is time to take the treat out of your hand and use the hand signal alone. Only put the treat back in your hand if all else fails.

Add the cue.

We add the cue, "down" only after your dog will go into position reliably and predictably with your hand signal.

Step 1. *Say it.* Tell your dog, "Fido, down" in a cheerful tone of voice. Remember, no treat in your hand!

Step 2. *Show it.* Pause a second (one-one thousand), and then use your hand signal (palm downward) to help cue your dog into a down by putting your hand near his nose and slowly moving it down to the ground near his front feet.

Step 3: *Pay it.* (See Easy Beginnings Step 2, above.) Repeat many times and in many different places.

Step 4: When your dog will go into the down after you pause a second and before you give the hand signal you know he understands the verbal command. Now you can do one or the other but not both cues.



DOWN (CONTINUED)

Another Training Method- Capturing

If the luring method is not working, this is an ideal behavior to capture. Even the most active dog lies down many times a day. Start by sitting in a chair with your dog on a leash. Be boring. Don't interact with your dog. When you find her starting to lie down, click and toss a treat between her paws so she can eat it without having to get up. Continue to click and toss every few seconds while she's still lying down. Then toss the treat slightly off to one side so she has to get up to get it. This puts her in a perfect position to offer you another down to get another treat. If she does not lie down immediately, just wait until she does. Don't say anything, and don't stare at her. But be ready to click and treat immediately. Keep repeating. You can practice while you are reading, watching TV, or working on the computer, just be sure to keep an eye on your dog so you catch her going into position. Timing is important, so be ready to click immediately when the behavior you want occurs.

Adding the Cue

When it dawns on her that she is getting treated for lying down, she will begin to offer it regularly. Now it's the time to add the cue. As she begins to lie down, say "Down!" and click and treat when she is fully in position. After many, many repetitions, try out the cue before she lies down to see if she knows it. If not, that's okay, just keep pairing it with the down behavior that she offers another hundred times, until it "clicks".

Training Tip: Only say the command once. Say it, then pause, and then pay it. When your dog is fluent at the down (going into the down quickly and consistently after you give the cue) the clicker is no longer needed.

Troubleshooting Luring: If you can't quite get your dog to lie down using luring, break the exercise into smaller steps. First click and treat him for following the treat to the ground while keeping his rear end on the floor, then for bending an elbow, then for bending both elbows. Make sure you click and treat liberally when you get a full down. Check out this video to show you how to do it in small steps: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpAFj-p23ig>

When to practice: anywhere and everywhere

While you're eating dinner.
While cooking dinner.
While chatting with a neighbor.
In the aisle of a store while you're shopping.
At a restaurant under the table.