

## Teaching Your Dog To “Down”

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### Definition

“Lie Down.” (We recommend using the command “off” rather than “down” for “get your front feet off someone” or for “get off the bed.”)

### Practical Uses

Down is the best, most comfortable position for your dog to stay in for any length of time. Down and especially down-stay are a wonderful calming maneuvers.

### How to Teach “Down”

With your dog sitting, hold the treat right in front of his nose. Slowly bring the treat straight down to the floor. The dog's head should follow the treat down to the floor. Pull the treat forward slowly along the floor and the rest of his body should follow naturally. If pulling the treat forward makes him stand up to reach the treat, try pushing it back toward his chest. As soon as his body touches the floor, \*click and give him the treat. Release him from this position with your release word, such as “free,” “okay” or “all done,” and take a step back, then give lots of praise and ask him to sit. Repeat.

### Comments

It is usually easier to teach “down” from a sit position since the dog's rear is already on the ground. Once he has learned it well from a sit, progress to having him do it from a standing position. If it is difficult to get him all the way down, remember to be patient, persistent, and/or try a better treat.

You can also:

- 🐾 Practice shaping his behavior by initially clicking and rewarding him for a partial down, then gradually enticing him further down each time.
- 🐾 For smaller dogs, sit on the floor with one or both legs bent, knee(s) up, foot flat on the floor, forming a triangle with your leg and the floor as the base. With the dog on one side of the triangle, perform the exercise as described above in “How to teach,” but now pull the treat under your bent leg(s), enticing or luring the dog to get down in order to follow the treat under your leg(s).
- 🐾 For larger dogs, use a chair with 4 open legs or a small table or similar object, depending on the size of your dog, to entice him down and under.

**Wait until your dog is performing the behavior reliably, which is about 80% of the time, while holding a treat as the lure before you add the cue “down” as he goes into position.**

After several repetitions with food as a lure, use the same hand motion without food. Say, “down” and when he goes into position, click and give him a treat as a reward from your treat bag, your pocket or your other hand. Gradually change your hand motion to the hand signal you want to use for down, such as pointing to the floor. Try not to bend over your dog. Rather, stand upright when you ask your dog to down.

When your dog consistently performs down on cue for a reward, click and give him a treat every second or third time. Or, only click and treat the faster downs.