

TEACHING YOUR DOG TO SETTLE

Teaching a dog that won't settle to lay down when asked, on a mat or a dog bed, gives them and you time to 'switch off' and chill out. When your dog settles and relaxes, it allows glutamate, (which is linked with brain development, cognition, learning and memory) to rise. It also releases dopamine, which makes them feel good.

For this exercise your dog will need to know a 'down', check out our guide on 'how to teach a down' to learn more about this.

Step one: Place a mat, blanket or towel on the floor so your dog has somewhere comfortable to lie down. Allow your dog to go over to the blanket and investigate.

Reward the dog whenever they investigate or go near the mat. Reward them by throwing treats on the mat instead of giving them from your hand to help build a strong association that the mat is a good place.

Step two: To progress, reward your dog when they have two paws on the mat and gradually build this up to them having all four paws on the mat. Repeat this until the dog is comfortable to walk over and stand on the mat.

Step three: Once your dog is comfortable to stand on the blanket, ask them to lay down and then reward them.

Step four: Once your dog goes to lie down on the mat whenever you get it out, wait for them to rest their head on the mat before rewarding.

Step Five: Build up some duration for laying on the mat, do this by delaying reward for a couple of seconds initially and then increasing this at your dog's pace. Don't go too quickly or your dog might get up!

Step Six: Once your dog is comfortable laying on the mat with you next to them, gradually increase the distance between you and the mat, moving one step away and rewarding them for staying on the mat.

Step Seven: Gradually include distractions and practise in different locations, using your dog's mat as a cue to settle.

This exercise should be calm and collected, practise at a time when your dog is already tired, encouraging calm behaviour from your dog. Remember to go at your dog's pace. If they move away from the mat or break their down position, go back a step and lure them back into position.