

# TEACH YOUR DOG TO LIE DOWN

Teaching your dog to lie down on cue is a great behaviour to train, especially as part of teaching your dog to stay or to settle.

It's much easier to teach your dog to lie down if they already know how to sit, but it is still possible even if they can't. Some dogs, such as greyhounds, or dogs with shorter legs, find sitting uncomfortable, so there are different methods you can try. With all these methods, your dog may find it easier and more comfortable to lie down on a mat or blanket.

## **Teaching a dog who can sit**

### **Step One**

With a smelly treat in your hand, ask your dog to sit (on the mat, if you have one.) As soon as they sit, let them sniff the treat and slowly lure their nose down to between their front paws, keeping the treat touching their nose. If they stand up, start over, and ask them to sit again. As soon as your dog lies down, praise them, and reward them with the treat.

You may find that your dog hovers with their elbows off the floor for a while before lying down. If they stay like this then stand them up and try again, this time rewarding them for almost lying down. Repeat until they fully relax in to lying down.

### **Step Two**

Repeat the process until your dog is following the treat lure and lying down consistently. Take it a step further by going through the first step again, but this time with a treat in both hands. Bring your dog down with one hand, and reward them with the treat in your other hand.

### **Step Three**

Now, with no treat, move your hand to the floor and say "down". Your dog may just look down at your hand without lying down. If this happens, tuck a treat between your palm and your thumb and repeat the signal of moving your hand to the floor. As soon as your dog lies down, praise them and give them a treat. Repeat this three times in succession and on the fourth repetition, use the same hand movement but with no treat. This will allow you to move on to giving the command without the expectation of food.

#### **Step Four**

Once your dog is comfortable with the hand signals, you can get your dog to lie down on voice cue alone. Say “down”, wait three seconds, give them the hand signal, and reward them for lying down. Repeat this a few times, increasing the seconds between voice cue and hand signal until your dog makes the connection between the two and responds to the voice cue alone.

#### **Step Five**

Now your dog understands how to lie down on cue, start to phase out the treat reward (but not the praise). Prioritise giving treats for faster downs, but you should still give praise for slower downs. Once your dog is lying down on command you can give treats every now and then, or if the environment is particularly distracting.

#### **Teaching dogs who cannot sit**

If your dog cannot sit, there are a few adjustments that can be made

##### **Greyhound-shaped dogs**

With your dog standing on a blanket, hold a smelly treat in your hand. Let them sniff the treat and slowly lure their nose down towards their chest, on to the floor. As they lie down, praise them and give them a treat. Once your dog is comfortable with this, you can continue with steps two-five above.

##### **Dogs with short legs**

Sit on the floor, or on a blanket, with your legs in front of you, bent up at the knee. Use a smelly treat to direct your dog to crawl under your legs. When their back end goes to the floor, praise them and reward them with a treat. Practise this several times until your dog is readily lying down. Once this feels comfortable, continue with steps two-five above.