

Teaching “Mat” or “spot”

Teaching your pet to lie down on a mat helps to provide him or her with an activity that they can feel confident doing during times of uncertainty. It can also be handy for overly enthusiastic dogs when people come over.

First you must choose a mat. A bath rug makes a perfect portable mat that you can use on the go and also take with you to the veterinary hospital. Other ideas for home use include: a spot on the couch, a dog bed or a small rug on the floor.

During the initial training he/she should be under the control of a leash.

1. Place your dog at a *sit stay* by your side.
2. Toss a treat on the mat. Walk with him onto the mat while saying your command word. *Mat* is a good example. He will eat the treat as a reward.
3. Then tell him *down* and *praise* and *treat*.
4. Repeat this a few times until he starts to get the idea what *mat* means.
5. Then give the command (without tossing the treat) and when he gets to his mat ask for a *down*, then *praise*, *treat*, and give his release command. (*OK* or *yes* are common releases)
6. Once he is doing that reliably start asking for a *down* and then *stay*. Give the command *mat*. At this point he will likely lie down automatically, then tell him to *stay*. (*Down* and then *stay* if he's not lying down on his own) Wait 2 seconds, *praise*, *treat* and *release*. Gradually increase the length of the stay until he will stay for 2 minutes with you standing next to him.
7. If you would like to use this command at home as a way to keep your pet in one area while you are performing an activity, then continue increasing the length and distance of the stay as follows: Once he will reliably stay with you next to him, gradually increase the distance between you until you can sit across the room for 2 minutes with him staying in his spot. Always increase the length of the stay **before** increasing the distance, so step away 1 foot for 1-2 seconds and gradually increase the length of time. Then step away 3 feet for 1-2 seconds and so on. Always remember to give lots of praise for success. Return to him **before** you give the release command. Also, as you extend the length of the stay you can say *good stay* to reassure him that's what you want, but also by repeating the word *stay* it reminds him that he can't get up yet. (You can practice stays during T.V. commercials or at dinner time).
8. If he breaks a stay, give an immediate verbal correction (*no* or *eh* work well) and guide him back to his spot. Give the command *stay* and this time don't go as long or as far away so that he will be successful. Again, it's best to make this command very solid from a short distance before moving to a longer distance. If he's breaking the command, then you are going too long or too far away too fast.

Ultimately you should be able to tell him “mat” off leash and have him stay until you release him.

