



Teach Your Dog the Down Command

If you want a well-mannered dog, teaching him to lie down on command is a must. This useful skill can help your dog control his impulses and help you control your pup. A dog in a Down is a good boy!

Step One: Luring Your Dog into Position

To teach your dog to lie down on cue, you need to get him into the right position and then reward him. An easy way to get started is to use a method called luring.

1. Start with your dog in a Sit.
2. Say the cue, "Down."
3. Hold a tasty treat firmly between your fingers so that your dog can smell it and lick it but not eat it. Put the treat right in front of your dog's nose. Then slowly move it straight down toward the floor, between his front legs. As your dog's nose follows the treat, just like a magnet, his head will bend all the way down to the floor. When the treat is on the floor between your dog's paws, start to move it away from him, like you're drawing a line along the floor. (The entire luring motion forms an L shape.) To continue to follow the treat, your dog will probably ease himself into the Down position. The instant his elbows touch the floor, say "Yes!" and immediately let him eat the treat from your fingers.
4. If your dog doesn't automatically stand up after eating the treat, just move a step or two away to encourage him to move out of the Down position.
5. When your dog readily follows a lure into the Down, you can try the next step. Some dogs will be ready for Step Two after just one or two training sessions. Others will need a few days of practice first. (Aim for at least two short sessions per day. Keep sessions short and sweet—just 5 to 10 minutes each.)



Troubleshooting

- If your dog doesn't follow a treat with his nose when you try to lure him, try using something more exciting, like a small piece of chicken, cheese or hot dog.
- If you've tried to lure your dog into a Down but he still seems confused or reluctant, sit down with your legs straight out in front of you. Your dog should be on your right or left side. Keeping your legs together and your feet on the floor, bend at the knee so that your legs make a "tent" shape. Hold a treat right in front of your dog's nose and continue to lure your dog until he has to crouch down to keep following the treat.
- Some dogs find it easier to follow a treat into the Down from a standing position.

Step Two: Introducing a Hand Signal

Now you're going to teach your dog to follow your empty hand into the Down position. You'll still reward him with treats, though, so keep them nearby or hidden behind your back.

1. Start with your dog in a Sit.
2. Say "Down."
3. Without a treat in your fingers, use the same hand motion you did before.
4. As soon as your dog's elbows touch the floor, say "Yes!" and immediately get a treat to give him. (Important note: Even though you're not using a treat to lure your dog into position, you must still deliver a reward when he lies down. You want your dog to learn that he doesn't have to see a treat to get one!)
5. Clap your hands or take a few steps away to encourage your dog to stand up.

Step Three: Shrinking the Hand Signal

You probably don't want to keep bending all the way down to the floor to guide your dog into the Down with your hand signal. To make things more convenient,



you can gradually shrink the signal so that it becomes a smaller movement. To make sure your dog continues to understand what you want him to do, you'll need to progress slowly.

1. Repeat Step Two, but instead of guiding your dog into the Down by moving your hand all the way to the floor, move it almost all the way down. Stop moving your hand when it's an inch or two above the floor. Then slowly your movement an inch or two smaller, stopping your hand three or four inches above the floor.
2. As you continue to gradually stop your hand, you soon won't have to bend over at all. You'll be able to stand up straight, say "Down," and then just point to the floor.

Step Four: Taking It on the Road

Your next job is to practice your dog's new skill in many different situations and locations so that he can lie down whenever and wherever you ask him to. Try adding distractions too!