



Teach Your Dog the Stay Command

Teaching your dog to go to a designated spot, like a bed or a mat, and stay there can prove useful in a variety of situations—like when you’re eating dinner, watching a movie with friends, greeting guests at the front door or visiting friends and family with your dog. Once your dog has mastered this skill, you can use it almost anywhere, whenever you need her to settle down for a while.

Teach Your Dog to Go to a Spot

First, you’ll need to teach your dog that her mat or bed is a great place to be. Cut some treats into bite-sized pieces before you begin training. Use something really exciting, like soft dog treats, chicken or cheese. The more your dog loves the training treats, the harder she’ll work to earn them.

Step One: Follow the Treat

1. Call your dog over to the bed or mat you’d like to use. Standing just a foot or two in front of the mat, say the cue, “Go to your spot.”
2. Hold a treat in front of your dog’s nose so she sees that you have something delicious, and then toss the treat onto the mat.

Your dog will step onto the mat to eat her treat.

Clap your hands and walk a few steps away to encourage your dog to move off of the mat.

Repeat this sequence, tossing the treat to guide your dog onto the mat from various angles. Eventually, your dog will start to seem reluctant to move away from her mat. (Why would she want to be anywhere else? That’s where she gets delicious treats!)

Step Two: Follow the Hand

Now, instead of tossing a treat to guide your dog onto the mat, you’ll introduce a hand signal.



1. Put a treat in one hand and hide it behind your back.
2. Standing a couple of feet away from the mat, say "Go to your spot."
3. Using your empty hand, point to the mat. Your movement should look a lot like the one you made in Step One when tossing a treat. In response to your pretend toss, your dog should turn her head toward the mat. When she does, take the hidden treat from behind your back and toss it onto the mat. (
4. Encourage your dog to move off of the mat so you can start over again. Repeat the sequence above 15 to 20 times.
5. Eventually, your dog will go all the way to her mat when you give the hand signal. As soon as all four of her paws are on the mat, say "Yes!" Then, instead of tossing the treat, walk over to the mat and feed your dog the treat from your hand.

Step Three: Go to the Mat from a Distance

If you'd like to teach your dog to go to her mat on her own from a distance, follow the guidelines below. However, you can skip this step if you don't mind walking with your dog to her mat when you'd like her to settle on it.

Practice *Step Two* for a few days, gradually increasing the distance your dog must travel to get to her mat. At first, stand just two feet away from the mat.

1. Say "Go to your spot."
2. Point toward the mat as you did in Step Two.
3. Wait silently for your dog to move onto her mat. When she does, say "Yes!" and give her a treat.
4. Practice this sequence until your dog quickly goes to her mat as soon as you say the cue and point. Then increase the distance between you and the mat.



Teach Your Dog to Settle and Stay in Her Spot

Now that your dog knows how to go to her mat, you can teach her to stay there. Before you start this stage of training, your dog will need to learn how to lie down when you ask her to and stay.

Step One: Stay on the Mat

1. Say “Go to your spot,” and point to the mat.
2. When your dog moves onto the mat, praise her enthusiastically and ask her to lie down. Then say “Stay.”
3. Count to 10 in your head.
4. Then say “Yes!” and give your dog a treat.
5. After your dog has finished her reward, release her with “Okay” to let her know her job is done. Encourage her to move off the mat by clapping or taking a few steps away. Then start again from the beginning.

As you increase the time, randomly throw in some easy short repetitions. If your dog gets up before you release her, gently take her by the collar and lead her back to her mat. Ask her to lie down and stay, but don’t give her a treat. (If you do, she might learn that the way to get another treat is to break her stay!) If she’s getting up a lot, you’re progressing too quickly. Your dog needs some shorter, easier repetitions for a while to really understand what you want her to do.

When you build up to about three minutes on the mat, you can start giving your dog something to keep her busy and happy while she stays in her spot for longer periods of time. Try to aim for 10-15 minutes.

Step Two: Add Distance

After your dog learns to settle down in her spot for a while, you can teach her to stay in place while you move away from her.



1. Say "Go to your spot," and point to the mat.
2. When your dog moves onto the mat, praise her enthusiastically and ask her to lie down. Then say "Stay."
3. Move a few steps away from the mat.
4. If your dog stays, say "Yes!" Then quickly return to the mat and give her a treat.
5. After your dog has finished eating her treat, say "Okay" to release her.
6. Encourage your dog to come off of the mat by clapping or moving a few steps away. Then you can start again from the beginning.

Step 3: Put Time and Distance Together

Now that you've worked on both increasing the time your dog stays on her mat and the distance you move away, you can try putting those two things together.

When you're ready to train, put your dog's mat six to eight feet away from your comfortable chair or the sofa. After you say "Go to your mat" and ask your dog to lie down and stay, hand her a stuffed KONG or something tasty to chew. Then move to your spot and relax for five minutes or so. When the time's up, release your dog with "Okay," and then take away the chew or KONG.

Practice this step for a few days, slowly increasing both the distance between your dog's spot and where you sit and the time that your dog stays on the mat.

Remember to throw in some easy, short repetitions so that your dog doesn't get bored or frustrated.

Step 4: Add Distractions

So far, you've been practicing in calm, quiet places with little to no distraction. Now you can start to add some distraction to the scenario. Practice in a variety of locations and situations. When your dog becomes a pro at staying on her mat when there are distractions around, you'll be able to start using this skill in real life.



If your dog can't stay on her mat when you move to a new location to train, you may have progressed too quickly. Try going back to a slightly less distracting location to practice for a while or asking her to stay for a shorter period of time.

NOTE: For AAWL adopters who need more information or if you have additional questions, please reach out to our support team at 602-273-6852 ext. 105.