



Go To Mat for Visitors

The goal is for this behavior is for the dog to hold a down-stay on his mat while visitors arrive and until he is released. To install this, we need to teach him to hold the down-stay with no visitors first. Follow these steps, practicing them on a mat that you only bring out during training sessions:

1. With the dog in a down on a mat, hold a tempting treat a couple of feet in front of him at nose level. He will likely get up – immediately say “Oh! Too bad!” and snatch the treat away. Signal him back into position and reward him. Repeat the treat temptation until he stays in position in spite of it for 1 second. Reward him right away for not moving (this is difficult!) – he must collect the reward in position.
2. Signal the dog into a down on his mat and reward him with a treat from your other hand. Place a treat on the floor a couple of feet away from him. When he goes for the treat, cover it! Make sure he doesn’t beat you! Repeat until he doesn’t go for the dropped treat. Then hand it to him. He has to eat the treat in a down-stay. Increase the duration between the dropped food and the reward to 3 seconds, then 5.
3. Signal the dog into a down on his mat and reward him with a treat from your other hand. Take one step to your left and then step back in front of him. If he stays, reward him. If he got out of position or “rotated” to follow you, say “Oh! Too bad!” and start over. Add one step at a time only if he has had five successful repetitions in a row. Try to get to a full circle around him in down-stay. Timing is critical: Catch him with “Oh! Too bad!” the instant he moves. Reward him in position if he stays.

Next, we will incorporate distance into the down-stay, and add in greater distractions (door knocking and simulation of visitors arriving). To teach your dog that knocks at the door mean good things are to come:

1. Prepare about 10 high value treats and store them in the fridge or other place that doesn’t tip your dog off to their existence.
2. Settle yourself comfortably with your dog near you.
3. When she seems to least expect it, get up and knock on the door.
4. Right after the sound, start praising your dog as you head over to the fridge. Give her a nice generous treat from your store, then resume your day.
5. Several times per day, at random times, repeat the process: when your dog least expects it, knock on the door and then happy talk your dog all the way to a fabulous treat.

To build on the work you've done with the down-stay on the mat thus far:

1. Signal your dog into a down on his mat and reward him with a treat from your other hand. Say the word "stay," then give him a hand signal. Take one step back, keeping your eyes on him in case he breaks the stay. If he stays, reward her in a down. If he breaks the stay, say "Oh! Too bad!" the instant he breaks and start over. Do not reward your dog for repositioning at this point. Add one step at a time until you are across the room. Keep your eyes on the dog so your timing is good. Return to him one second after you reach the distance, as though there were a bungee cord connecting you and him. This step is to build distance, not to build duration, of the stay.
2. When the dog is consistently holding his down-stay when you walk across the room, you can start to add some duration. Put him in a down-stay on his mat, and then walk to the other end of the room, keeping your eyes on him. Now you want to wait a few seconds before returning back to him and rewarding him. Practice in the following increments:

10 seconds	1 second
3 seconds	15 seconds
15 seconds	9 seconds
4 seconds	15 seconds
4 seconds	11 seconds
7 seconds	6 seconds
15 seconds	7 seconds
12 seconds	15 seconds
8 seconds	8 seconds

Next, you are going to begin to chain all of behaviors that you have been practicing for greeting visitors. You will use a familiar person to get your dog used to the exercise before we bring it into the problem context. For steps 2 thru 6, reward the dog each time he successfully completes a step, and do not move on to the next step until he has gotten 5 correct responses in a row. Recruit a familiar person to practice the following:

1. With the dog put away, have the person enter the family room, and sit down on the couch with a handful of treats. Bring your dog into the room, and have the person toss treats to your dog until he is consistently approaching him or her in anticipation of treats.
2. With the person standing 15 feet away from the dog's mat, signal your dog to go to his mat and hold a down-stay. After 10 seconds, have the familiar person release him with the "touch cue," and reward him for targeting the familiar person's hand. (See additional handout on "Touch")

3. Next, practice entrances with the familiar person. Repeat step 2, but signal the dog to go to his mat before you walk to the front door and let the visitor in.
4. Now it's time to add knocking to the equation! Have the familiar person stand on the other side of the front door and knock (softly). Immediately after the knock, signal the dog to go to his mat and hold a down-stay for 10 seconds.
5. Repeat step 4, but after the 10-second stay, have the person enter, close the door and stand in the doorway. After 1 second, have the person release the dog with the "touch" cue.
6. Practice this sequence with as many familiar visitors as possible to get the dog into the habit of this routine with all visitors!