

Down on Mat

Purpose

This exercise teaches your dog that lying down on his mat, out of the way, is rewarding.

Prerequisites

Teach the dog "down" (lie down) before beginning this exercise.

Preparation

Have a chair, a rug or mat, a pouch of yummy treats, and a hungry dog.

Process

Step 1: Place a treat on the mat. Allow the dog to go to the mat to get the treat. Repeat this a few times. This will build the dog's interest in the mat.

Step 2: Reward (mark and treat) for any contact with the mat. When the dog figures out that every time he goes to his Mat he gets a cookie he will offer it willingly and often

Step 3: When the dog is standing on the mat, ask for the down (alternatively, the down can be shaped on the mat). When he lies down, mark the behavior and toss a treat a couple of feet away from the mat, so he has to leave the mat to get it. This sets him up to repeat the behavior of going to the mat and lying down. Repeat.

Step 4: Once the dog automatically goes to the mat and lies down every time finishes the tossed treat, gradually add distance (place yourself farther from the mat). Separately, add duration (wait a moment before clicking and tossing the treat). Then add minor distractions.

Step 5: When the down-on-mat behavior is strong, add the cue "go lie down".

Troubleshooting

If you are unable to get the dog to lie down on the mat, lure him into a down position by holding the treat in your hand on the mat and waiting a few seconds. When he lies down, open your hand so he can get the treat.