

Down

Lying down is one of the harder cues for dogs to learn, but it's very useful. Dogs who understand 'down' are much more welcome in public places and much more pleasant to have near the dinner table. 'Down' is also a handy cue if you want to keep your puppy in place for a while: it takes more energy to get up from a down than a sit, so dogs are less likely to break the position.

1. Start with a handful of soft and smelly treats and find a quiet spot free of distractions.
2. Ask your dog to "sit". (Later we will teach him to lie down from a standing position, but it is much easier to start from a sit to start out.)
3. Hold a food reward near your dog's nose and slowly bring the treat straight down. The hand signal will be a flat palm down for this behavior.

Don't say the verbal cue until he is going into the position consistently. Sometimes, if your dog doesn't lie down right away, you may have to bring the treat back up to his nose and try again or move the treat backwards or forwards on the ground to see what will work.

4. Be patient with this exercise – it may not work perfectly the first time. If your dog gets up instead of lying down, try again.

Once he lies down, mark the behavior with a click or say "yess" and give him the treat.

You can also get your dog to settle on one hip. This is helpful to keep your dog in the position since it is harder to pop out of quickly. To do this, get your dog into the 'down' position and then slowly bring the treat around to his side. Keep it close to him, otherwise he may get up. As soon as he rolls onto his hip, say click or say "yess" and treat. If you are consistent with this every time, he will soon start to go on his hip automatically every time.

5. Once your dog is lying down consistently, you can start to add the verbal cue, "down". Ask your dog to 'sit' and then flip your hand over to show him the 'down' hand signal. Say "down" and then start to guide him into the position like you did before. Click or say "yess" and give him the treat when he is all the way into the position.
6. At this time, you should also be implementing your release word. This is done by asking your dog for the down, rewarding him, and then waiting 1-2 seconds before saying the release word. (You will add more time to this as you go)
7. The next steps to this behavior will be to decrease how much you guide your dog into the position, proofing the 'down' in new situations and environments, and varying when you give the food reward.