



# Tie-Down Exercises

## What is the purpose of a Tie-Down?

A Tie-Down is a management and training tool useful for teaching polite introductions to new people (no jumping) and for teaching your dog to relax in the house. This is not a substitute for training but is a useful tool to aid in training your dog. Tie-Downs can also be useful for keeping an eye on your new dog who isn't yet fully house trained.

A Tie-Down allows your dog to be with/near you while learning to be calm and relaxed. The place of the Tie-Down should be within view of you/your family and should be comfy and pleasant. Your dog can have a dog bed/mat and toys while on Tie-Down. Tie-Down is not a punishment zone.

*A Tie-Down should NEVER be used when someone is not home or as a punishment for bad behavior.*

## How to create a Tie-Down.

A Tie-Down can be as simple as a leash looped around a heavy (hard-to-move) piece of furniture or door hinge. Click on [this](#) video for a demonstration of setting up a tie down using a door hinge. You can install an eye-bolt into your baseboard or stud in the wall just above the baseboard (only do this if you don't mind having it as a more permanent fixture in your room). The Tie-Down space should be in your view but so your dog can not access you, or anything she/he might chew on. Your dog will have about a 4 or 5 foot radius to move around.

Make sure the leash you use for Tie-Down is sturdy and chew-proof for heavy chewers. A cable leash (less than 6' in length) works great for tie-downs as do lightweight chain leashes (careful not to use the fabric handle to keep it chew-proof). If your dog is not prone to chewing, a sturdy, one-inch wide leash or rope-style leash will work but you will need to check it regularly to make sure it isn't frayed/chewed which will weaken integrity and could lead to breaking.

You can also set up a Tie-Down spot in your backyard using a small tree, railing, or heavy patio furniture to wrap the leash around. Do NOT leave your dog on tie-down in the yard unless you are there with them at all times. The Tie-Down leash/cable can be attached to your dog's regular collar (martingale-style collars are preferred so your dog can't squirm out of the collar) but if your dog tends to jump/lunge this is a good use for a securely-fitted, back-attaching harness, so as not to harm the dog's neck when they jump. Do not use a training collar (gentle leader, choke collar, prong collar, etc) while your dog is in Tie-Down.



Practice putting your dog on Tie-Down before starting any of the following exercises. They should be comfortable with the set-up so it doesn't interfere with the training.



*Image from Human Society of Silicon Valley*

### **Tie-Down Exercises to Teach Calm/Relaxed Behavior (Eliminating Rambunctious, Attention-Getting Behaviors, including begging at the dinner table.)**

All dogs require exercise but as long as your pup is getting plenty of physical exercise during the day, he/she can also learn how to be calm in your presence when you need some peace and quiet.

- Start with exercises several times a day for five to ten minutes, gradually increasing the time on Tie-Down. At first, this may be challenging for your pup if he/she is used to being next to you commanding your constant attention.
- Put your pup on Tie-Down with a chew toy (e.g. stuffed kong) and sit in the same room.
- If your pup is whining, barking or pulling toward you, completely ignore him/her. Don't look at him and don't talk to him, don't even tell him to be quiet -- ZERO attention.
- Capture a moment of quiet/calm behavior and then reward your pup by looking over and giving him/her some verbal praise, "good dog" and toss a small treat to him/her. As long as your dog remains quiet, you will occasionally give him/her verbal praise and treats (frequently at first then gradually increase the time between giving your attention). You can even walk over and pet your pup, as long as he/she stays calm.
- In the beginning these calm moments may be very brief but try to capture them so you can provide praise/reward and start teaching your dog how to get what he/she wants (your attention).
- At any time he/she gets too excited, turn your head and go back to ignoring your dog (zero attention).
- End each training session on a positive note with calm, relaxed behavior.
- As your dog starts to understand that quiet/calm behavior gets him/her the attention they desire, and they are calm for five to ten minutes at a time, you can release him/her from Tie-Down and see if they can continue with calm/relaxed behavior without the Tie-Down.



## **Tie-Down Exercises to Curb Jumping Up on People.**

Dogs have a natural tendency to jump up to get your attention (and shower you with affection) but you can teach them there is a better way to get your attention -- by approaching you calmly with all four feet on the floor. The following exercises teach your dog that this is much more rewarding.

*Do NOT do this exercise if your dog is showing fear of people coming near him/her or is displaying territorial behaviors when someone enters the home.*

- These exercises work best if you have more than one person so ask friends/family to help you out.
- Put your pup on tie-down and stand across the room, or a ways apart from your dog.
- One by one you will take turns approaching your dog. Your dog will be excited as you approach but as long as he/she remains with all paws on the floor (no jumping) you will continue to advance toward your dog.
- If at any time your dog starts to jump, you will turn and walk away. You don't have to say anything, just turn your attention off.
- Now it's the next person's turn to approach. Same thing happens. As long as your dog keeps all four paws on the ground, the person will continue to approach. If your dog can remain with all "four on the floor" you will go all the way up to him/her and can start calmly petting.
- If your dog jumps up at any time, turn your attention off and walk away.
- Don't be discouraged if your pup doesn't get it the first time or two you do this exercise. After a few minutes, or when you've had enough, you will either let your dog off the tie-down and join the room (but only if he/she has been successful at staying calm/not jumping) or put your dog in another room if he/she isn't quite ready to meet people without jumping on them.
- You can do this exercise in short segments but the more times you do it, the faster your pup will learn that the key to getting attention is to NOT jump.

Click on [this link](#) for a video demonstration of this exercise.

## **Tie-Down Exercises for Anxious Barking/Nuisance Behaviors When New People Enter the Home.**

Tie-Down exercises are used in conjunction with teaching a "place" command. Check out these training video links to demonstrate [how to teach "Place"](#) and [how to use place when guests come over](#).

*For dogs with extreme fear of strangers or territorial behaviors, please do NOT do Tie-Down exercises without consulting the APA Behavior Team. We will want to*



modify/tailor these exercises specifically for your dog.

These exercises are best done with friends/family who are coming over and will be staying for a bit. When a service person comes over, it's best to just put your pup away in another room so they can get their job done and leave with no interaction with your pup.

Depending on the level of our dog's anxious behavior, you may need to advance very slowly. Your pup is ready for the next step only when he/she is showing calm/relaxed behavior.

#### STEP ONE:

- Ask your guests to call or text you before entering the house so you can put your pup in the tie-down spot. This spot should not be right at the front door but some place that's in the same room you will be sitting and where your guests can move around without passing directly in your pup's path.
- When your guests enter, ask them to ignore your pup completely (no looking at or talking to your pup.)
- You will also ignore your pup if he/she is doing anything other than showing calm behavior (standing is fine, just not pulling toward you.)
- Sit down in the room with your guests and ignore your pup. Have treats available. While your pup is barking or lunging or even pulling on the tie-down, you all will ignore him/her.
- Wait for a moment of calm and in that calm moment YOU will turn your attention toward your pup. You can talk to him/her ("good dog") and toss a treat to him/her. If your dog continues in a calm manner, you can continue to reward with praise/treats. At first, these moments of calm may be very very brief (perhaps even while your dog is catching his/her breath) but try to capture it and reward it.
- If your dog goes back to being rambunctious, turn your attention off and go back to ignoring your pup.
- If your dog can remain calm for 5 minutes, you can get up and go over to give him/her some pets/affection.
- If your dog can remain calm for up to 10 minutes, move on to the next step.

#### STEP TWO:

- Now that your pup can be calm while your guests are sitting, it's time to have your guest get up and move around a bit. This may excite your pup all over again. If you have multiple guests over, have your guests take turns with this step so it's only one person at time at first.
- Give your guest a handful of yummy treats (something your pup really loves and doesn't get often.)
- At first, your guest will simply stand up. As they start standing they should begin



- tossing treats over to your pup. You will be neutral during this time. If your pup starts barking, ask your guest to simply stand in place and toss treats. If your pup stops barking long enough to eat some treats you can praise him/her from your seat. Be sure to turn off all your attention if your pup starts barking/pulling again.
- After a moment or two of quiet (even if it's just because he is gobbling up those yummy treats) have your guest sit back down. We want the guest to sit back down when your pup is NOT barking/jumping/pulling so try to capture a quiet moment.
  - Repeat Step Two as necessary until your guest can stand up without triggering excited energy from your pup. If you have multiple guests over, have each one take turns standing and tossing treats.

### STEP THREE

- Have your guest (one at a time), from a standing position, start to move around the room. At first, your guest will stay in sight of your pup.
- All the while your guest is moving, have him/her "rain treats" on your dog. Your guest will continue to ignore your pup while tossing the treats.
- If your pup can be calm with your guest moving around the room in sight, now have your guest walk out of the room for a moment and then return (walk to the kitchen or a bathroom.) They should toss treats as they leave and as they re-enter.
- If your dog can focus on the treats instead of your guest, you will reward your pup with praise. Whenever your pup is barking/jumping you will completely ignore your pup.
- When your pup can successfully remain calm while one guest is moving around, ask another guest to do the same thing.
- Once your pup is able to remain calm while your guests move about the room your pup is ready to come off tie-down. Do not release your pup from the tie-down if she/he continues to show nervous or rowdy behavior toward your guests.
- When taking your pup off of tie down, we recommend you keep a drag leash attached to their collar. A drag leash is a normal leash clipped to the collar that no one is holding, instead it drags on the floor wherever the dog moves. It serves as a useful extension so that you can quickly step on the leash or pick it up to regain control of your dog if you notice they become nervous or rambunctious so that you can easily lead them back to tie down.
- While working through the tie down exercise your dog may have become comfortable in the same room with your guest but that does not necessarily mean they want the guest to touch or pet them. Before allowing your pup off tie down, instruct guests to continue ignoring your pup and to not reach towards or try to engage with your pup directly; just ignore the pup like they did previously.
- Your pup may choose to approach your guest to sniff them or get a closer look but this is not necessarily an invitation to be petted. Guests should refrain from reaching towards or petting your pup unless your pup is clearly soliciting the attention such as nudging the person with their nose/ head, leaning into them or showing very loose, wiggly body language to seek engagement from the guest.



- If your pup seems to be soliciting pets and attention from your guest then they can practice consent-petting. Please watch [this video](#) to learn more. Watch your pup's behavior closely, if they seem uncomfortable with the interaction then calmly ask the guest to stop and then call your pup away.

**If your dog shows more extreme nervous/anxious behavior and can not settle down with guests in the home please CONTACT THE BEHAVIOR TEAM so we can work with you to modify this training technique for your dog and your situation.**