

Go to Place/Mat

Teaching your dog to settle on a mat or bed helps manage their behavior with a safe, calming space. This cue can be used when guests arrive, when you're eating, or whenever you need your dog to settle in one spot.



Why Teach “Go to Place”/Mat Training?

- Helps manage overexcited behaviors.
- Prevents jumping on guests or begging at the table.
- Provides a safe space for your dog to relax.
- Great for impulse control.
- Can be used in various environments, like vet offices or cafes.

Step 1: Introduce the Surface

1. Place the mat, towel, or bed on the floor and let your dog investigate it.
2. As soon as your dog steps on the mat, mark the behavior with a “Yes!” or a click and give a treat. You can hand your dog the treat directly to their mouth, or place it on the mat in front of them.
3. Encourage them to get off the mat verbally or with a tossed treat to reset for the next repetition.
4. Repeat this several times to build a positive association with the mat.

Step 2: Add the Cue

1. Once your dog consistently steps all four feet on the mat, add the verbal cue “**Place**” or “**Mat.**”
2. Say the cue just before your dog steps on the mat.
3. Mark the behavior with “Yes!” or a click and reward with a treat.

Step 3: Increase Duration

1. After your dog steps on the mat, lure them into a **down**. Mark and reward once they're lying down.
2. Give another treat if they remain lying on the mat for three seconds.
3. Gradually increase the time they stay on the mat before getting another treat.
4. Use a release word like “**free**” to let them know when they can leave the mat.
5. If they get off the mat before you've released them, simply lure them back to the mat and try again.



Step 4: Add Distance and Distractions

1. Start sending your dog to the mat from a few steps away. Be very patient when giving the cue and let them think about it. After three tries with no success, take a step closer to the mat and try again.
2. Gradually increase the distance.
3. Practice in different rooms and with distractions (e.g., another person walking around, knocking/doorbell ringing, guests arriving). Always set your dog up for success by gradually increasing the distractions!

Troubleshooting Tips

- **Dog won't stay on the mat?** Start with shorter durations and gradually increase. Use high-value rewards to keep them engaged.
- **Dog gets distracted?** Practice in low-distraction environments first. Slowly introduce distractions as they improve.
- **Dog won't go to the mat on cue?** Go back a step and reinforce the behavior by rewarding every time they step on the mat. Use a treat to lure them onto the mat if they aren't stepping on it on their own.

Tips for Success

- **Be consistent:** Use the same cue word and release word every time.
- **Practice regularly:** Short, frequent sessions are more effective than long, occasional ones.
- **Make it rewarding:** Use high-value treats and praise to reinforce the behavior.
- **Be patient:** Training takes time, especially when adding distance and distractions.

Resources:

[Training a Dog to Settle-](#) Training Positive
[Place-](#) Smart Bitch Modern Dog Training
[Release Cues-](#) Darcy the Dog Trainer