

Place



Teaching your dog to go to **“Place”** – a bed or other object with defined boundaries – and stay there can be one of the most versatile and useful behaviors. It is useful when you have guests or when you want to accept a delivery, helpful when you want your dog away from the kitchen or dining table, and you can take it on the road and use it while traveling or visiting friends and family. **Place** is different from **Down** in that the dog must stay on something with boundaries like a bed or bath mat. Using a raised bed for teaching this behavior can be very useful.

1. See **“MARK AND REWARD TRAINING”** handout for how to establish a marker.

2. TEACH YOUR DOG THAT THE PLACE (bed, mat, board) IS GOOD*

- A. Stand or sit near the dog bed with treats close by or in your pocket. When your dog puts a paw on the bed, mark it and drop a treat slightly off or away from the bed. Avoid making eye contact, luring or prompting your dog, or chattering at your dog. This is simply about him putting a paw on the bed and making a treat appear.
- B. Once your dog is reliably putting a paw on the bed, wait until he has two or more paws on the bed, then mark and toss the treat. Continue this until your dog is reliably getting all the way onto the bed.
- C. If you would like your dog to lie down on “Place” (Down is a position that a dog can hold for long periods of time and is comfortable for him. We recommend that dogs hold a down position while on place), put a treat in your closed hand once your dog is on the bed and lower your hand to the bed in front of him. Do not command him to down, just hold your fist on the bed until he downs. Once he lies down, open your hand and let him eat the treat off the bed.
- D. Once your dog is reliably lying down on the bed, start saying “Place” as soon as he’s in the down position, then mark and reward. The sequence is important, name the behavior the dog is doing (“place” = lying down on the bed), mark the behavior to let them know that it is good and worthy of a reward, then deliver the reward.
- E. **ALWAYS release your dog with a clear release word (“Free,” “Release,” “Finished”) to indicate that they are allowed to leave the place.**

3. TEACH YOUR DOG TO STAY ON THE PLACE

- A. Begin to increase the length of time that the dog stays on the bed by continuing to remind the dog “place” and marking and rewarding them for remaining in the down.
 - i. Continue reminding, marking, and rewarding for staying on the bed. Start with a rapid rate of reinforcement and gradually decrease the rate of treats as your dog gets better at staying on the bed.
- B. Increase your distance from the place in small increments. Continue to remind your dog “place” and “mark and reward” the dog for continuing to lie on the place.
 - i. If your dog struggles with duration or your distance from him, go slower or in smaller increments.
 - ii. If your dog stands up or moves away from the place before being given the release word, gently tell him ‘uh-uh’ or give him another negative verbal marker and guide him back to the bed and into the down. As soon as he’s back in the place position, remind him “place” and “mark and reward”.

4. TEACH YOUR DOG TO STAY ON PLACE REGARDLESS OF DISTRACTIONS

- A.** Remember to offer your dog more support (in the form of reminding, marking, and rewarding) as you increase distractions.
- B.** Start with distractions farther away and yourself closer to your dog so that you can deliver rewards and praise (or help your dog stay on place if the distraction is too much) immediately as the distraction happens.
 - i.** As your dog understands to stay on place no matter what is happening, you can move farther away to increase the difficulty level for your dog.
- C.** Some examples of distractions:
 - i.** Someone walking past or walking into the room
 - ii.** Someone stopping to chat with you
 - iii.** Someone bouncing a ball or playing with a toy
 - iv.** The doorbell ringing or someone knocking on the door

5. SENDING YOUR DOG TO PLACE

- A.** Start with your dog several feet away from the place and as you tell her/him “Dog, place”, point to the place and walk your dog toward it. If she is going on her own, let her continue without you going all the way with her. Mark and reward her as soon as she lies down on the place.
 - i.** Keep practicing from further and further away from the place. You can use an enthusiastic tone of voice or even jog toward the place to increase your dog’s speed and excitement to perform the task.
- B.** Option 2 for sending to place:
 - i.** Start with your dog in a sit or down several feet away from the place (if your dog will not hold the position on his/her own, have someone hold the leash or tether him/her).
 - ii.** Place a treat or kibble on the place while your dog is watching.
 - iii.** Return to the dog and tell him “Dog, place”
 - iv.** When he runs to the bed to eat the treat, follow calmly and wait for, or lure him into, the down on the place. Remind, mark, and reward.
 - v.** Gradually increase the distance that you start from the place and fade out the treat on the place so that all rewards come directly from you.

6. GENERALIZE!

- A.** Move the place and practice in different rooms, outside, other houses, etc.
- B.** Change the place to something else and practice in other locations
 - i.** Use a blanket, jacket, park bench, picnic table, etc. – be creative and use what you find while on walks.
- C.** Have other people send your dog to place, practice with different family members or friends.
- D.** *Be certain to offer more support and help your dog understand that you still want the same behavior even when it’s in a different location or on a different object. You may need to take a few steps back and reward more frequently until your dog understands what you want.*

*** To fast-track the teaching of “place” – you can combine and start at Steps 2C & 2D.**