

Mat training can be useful to keep dogs in a certain spot for a while. For example, when visitors are entering the house, or while you are having dinner. Mat training increases your dog's confidence when he or she is on their own. This is especially beneficial for dogs that suffer from stress when left alone or dogs that tend to seek lots of attention.

It is important to remember to start mat training in an environment with very little distraction, for example, your lounge room with nobody else present. Over time, gradually increase the level of distraction.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step one: Start by positioning your mat on the floor.

Step two: Use a treat to lure your dog onto the mat. The moment your dog touches the mat, bridge and reward.

Step three: Once your dog goes to his or her mat reliably, you can increase the difficulty. Only bridge and reward when your dog's entire body is positioned on the mat.

After a few repeats ask your dog to sit or drop on the mat.

Step four: After a few successful repetitions, begin to fade the lure. Repeat the same hand motion but leave the treat in your pouch until you are ready to reward.

Step five: Once your dog knows the exercise quite well, you can add the verbal cue "go to your mat".

Step six: Once your dog is able to sit or drop on his or her mat reliably, you can increase the duration spent on the mat.

Start by asking your dog to sit or drop, then stand directly in front of your dog for a few seconds. If he or she doesn't move, bridge and reward.

If your dog moves, just reposition him or her and repeat the exercise with a shorter duration.

Step seven: Take a single quick step backwards with one foot, step back forwards immediately. If your dog doesn't move, bridge and reward.

Step eight: You can increase the distance you are walking away from your dog step by step.

Step nine: Once your dog is comfortable with you stepping back a few meters, you can try to turn your back briefly. Alternatively, you could walk around your dog.

Step ten: After a while you will be able to quickly step out of the room. Eventually your dog will be able to stay on the mat for a prolonged period of time, waiting for you to return, bridge and reward.

Whenever your dog leaves the mat too soon, just quietly reposition him or her and decrease the difficulty of the exercise.

TIPS



Make sure your dog finds the mat you are working with comfortable.

Ensure the mat is positioned in a location that the dog finds safe.

Avoid moving too far away from your dog too soon. Literally take it step by step moving back to your dogs quickly rather than pausing at a distance before returning to your dog.

More questions? Need help?

Email our professional behaviour trainers on petsquad@dogshome.com

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