



DOWN

We teach down in a way so you don't have to bend over and point to the ground every time you want your dog to lie down. We use shaping to get the dog to offer the behavior and then fade the prompts that we started with. You will have a dog offering a down while you are standing straight up. Here's how we do it.

TRAINING SETUP:

5 minute training sessions. You will need: Clicker, Treats, and a Timer. You can start this game with your dog on a tie down (leash attached to something sturdy). It is imperative though that your dog is restrained in some way.

FIRST STEP:

Start with the dog on a tie-down and a put a pile of food (at least 10 pieces) in front of them on the ground. You'll want lots of small pieces of food that you can pile together and toss out one by one as you click. Place the pile out of the dog's reach, but close enough that they will try to get it. As your dog is pulling forward and leaning down and reaching with their paws, their body is getting lower and lower to the ground. You will be sitting next to your pile, clicking any movement forward or down, or any effort to get the pile. You can click any of the following behaviors: leaning forward, pawing, or offering the bow position. This step takes the longest. The most little behaviors you click to more they will stay in the game. Eventually the dog will offer a down. . Some dogs will finally lay down because they got tired of stretching and it was easier for them. Some puppies lose their balance and flop down. And some really smart dogs are thinking and trying to figure out how to make you click. It doesn't matter what the reason is, they will figure it out and do it on purpose with time and practice.

When the dog finally lays down completely, give them a jackpot with one click and several treats. The bigger of a deal you make out of the final down, the faster they will offer it again the next few times you try this. After you give your jackpot, say "ok" to release them and toss at treat behind them to get them up. As soon as they eat it and come back, you are starting over again, clicking any movement forward and down, or effort to get the pile. You will continue to jackpot the downs while also requiring a bit more out of the dog before each click. For some dogs this takes a few minutes, and for others it takes a few training sessions. When you are getting frequent downs, about 8 per minute, then you can start the next process.

Helpful Hint: Reward often in the beginning or your dog will give up and stop trying to reach the food. If you're having trouble, you can sit sideways with your leg making a bridge between the dog and the food, and they have to go under it in order to get clicked. This will help them lower their shoulders and back, and finally flop into a down. However you should go back to the original method above immediately.

STANDING UP:

The next part includes picking yourself and the treats up off the floor so that your dog can learn to offer a down while you're standing straight up with no food visible. We have to gradually fade the visual prompt of you on the ground next to a pile of treats that your dog has been relying on. We're going to slowly change that picture to you standing up more and more, each time the dog offers a down. You'll want to start with the food still on the ground however now you are going to be squatting instead of sitting on the ground. Wait for a down and click/treat it when it happens. Then say "ok" and toss a treat to get them up. While they're up and eating that treat, you will your body position slightly more off the ground and wait there for the dog to return and offer you another down. Each time your dog offers a down and gets rewarded, you get a little higher off the ground. Be patient and let them think about what they need to do in order to earn your click/treat.

Progress gradually at this stage or your dog will get frustrated. If you progress too fast, you can always get a bit lower until your dog is successful at that height, and then start raising yourself up again the next time.

GIVE IT A NAME:

When you are standing straight and your dog is offering a down consistently, it's time to add the cue. The next time your dog starts to lie down, say "down" just as they're completing the down, and click/treat immediately afterwards. For some dogs, this is when the elbows hit the ground. For others it's when the rump touches down. Be careful not to say "down" too early, or your dog may not complete the down. Make sure to practice this in different places and surfaces, on and off leash, so that it becomes generalized and your dog will understand it everywhere.

CRATE MODIFICATION:

You can play the down game in a crate as well. You would pile the treats just outside the crate door (wire crates work best for this). You click/treat all the same behaviors. The treat is delivered to the dog in the crate at the very base bottom.