

Teaching your dog to go to a place on command

Ellen Lindell



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The 'place' command is an effective tool for managing behaviours, such as excessive barking. Although barking can be interrupted, for instance with a verbal correction, it may resume if the trigger remains. It can be very helpful to follow the correction with giving your dog an acceptable alternative behaviour.

Place

It is necessary to establish a suitable place. This can be a dog bed or a mat that is near the family's main sitting area but away from the main window.

Stage 1

Begin training in the absence of the offending stimulus.

1. Ask your dog to 'stay'.
2. Go to the place and put a treat on it.
3. Release your dog with 'OK'.
4. As the dog trots toward the treat, say 'mat' or 'bed', as appropriate.
5. Follow along, ask the dog to 'sit' and give a second treat.
6. Repeat; vary the starting distance.

Stage 2

Put the treat on the spot when the dog is not watching. Ask him/her to 'mat' or 'bed'; follow along, ask him/her to 'sit' and give a second treat.

Stage 3

When your dog begins to bark, for instance at a person passing by, attract his/her attention to interrupt the bark then send him/her to the chosen place. Reward.

1. Either use a down–stay or sit–stay command to keep the dog in place; food titbits may be used to reward this quiet behaviour.
2. Or fasten a lead and bring the dog to an area of the house where he/she will not encounter the stimulus.

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Tips

- If your home is very large, you may need to set up more than one 'place'.
- Vary the starting location.
- To encourage success, practise sit–stay and down–stay exercises at your dog's 'place' when there are few distractions.
- DO NOT use this method if there are several dogs present, young children in the home, or if your dog behaves aggressively about food.
- If several dogs are in the home, you may be able to train one dog at a time while the others are confined elsewhere.
 - Rather than leaving the treat on the floor, hold the treat in your hand.
 - Show the treat.
 - Encourage the dog to follow you as you both walk to the 'place'. Ask the dog to 'sit' and reward.
 - Repeat until the dog begins to trot ahead towards its 'place', anticipating the treat. The moment the dog moves ahead, give the command 'mat' or 'bed, etc.; meet the dog at the 'place' and give the treat.