

Basic training: Go to bed



Teaching a go to bed cue is useful for managing situations at home, allowing you to ask your dog to go to their safe space while you see to children, when visitors arrive, or if you feel your dog needs a bit of space. This is always a consistent space that you have already positively introduced (See '**Dog welfare**' and '**Crate training**' handouts).

Step 1: Make your training area calm and distraction free. Choose a comfy bed that your dog already has positive associations with.

Step 2: Teach your dog '**down**' and '**stay**' first—these are key elements (see handouts for more information).

Step 3: With a **tasty treat** in your hand, **lure** your dog onto their bed and into a down position. When they lie fully down, place the treat on the bed so that they receive their reward **from the bed** and not from you, and calmly praise them (we want to keep excitement levels down).

Step 4: Repeat this, until your dog performs the behaviour with **minimal luring** and you feel confident your dog understands where they get the treat from.

Step 5: Now your dog understands the behaviour of walking to their bed and lying down, you can **introduce your cue** of “on your bed” - say the cue whilst guiding your dog onto their bed and into the down position. Repeat to build strong associations.

Step 6: You can now **reduce your lure**, by asking for “on your bed” without a treat in your hand, then adding some **distance** between your hand and your dog’s nose, so they are no longer guided by a treat directly in front of them. Gradually increase this distance between your hand and your dog until they are going to their bed when you ask, without your hand guiding them.

Step 7: Turn your guiding hand into a **hand cue**, such as a point to the bed.

Step 8: Gradually build up distance between your dog and their bed when you ask for “on your bed” and point. With repetition, your dog will be going to their bed **from another room**. Remember to always **reward your dog** with a tasty treat or chew when they get into their bed!

Step 9: Increase **duration** of your dog being on their bed by asking for “**stay**” once they are down. Choose a **release cue** such as “all done!” to guide your dog off of their bed with another treat when they are safe to do so. This keeps the “stay” cue strong.

Step 10: Generalise the training to **other members in the household**, at different times of day, with you walking away, leaving the room, and gradually introducing **distractions** such as the children playing and having visitors at the door.

Finished behaviour: Ask for “on your bed”, use hand point as cue, dog goes to bed, gets rewarded.



Basic training: Settle

Similar to teaching “on your bed”, a “**settle**” is useful for when your dog is **on the lead** and you want them to relax and have some quiet time. During a “settle”, your dog can get up and move around, but it’s a way of you saying that **it’s time for some calm down-time** without being entertained. This could be used when in a café, at a playground, when you’re chatting to friends, or even just around the house.

Step 1. Introduce this first when in the home, where there are no distractions. Have your dog on their lead, and ask them to lie down on a chosen special interest blanket, towel, or mat, that you will take with you when out and about. This acts as a visual cue and target for your dog (as well as keeping them comfy!) You can practise this when you’re reading a book or watching TV.



Step 2. When in the down position, ask them to “settle” and give them a nice long-lasting chew to keep them occupied. When your dog has finished and/or relaxed into their settle, verbally praise them with a calm “goood” or “nice settle”, and/or reassure them with calm physical praise.

Step 3. You can build up the duration and positive associations of the settle by popping your dog a treat on their blanket ever so often. Make sure to do so from the blanket, so your dog doesn’t come to you to receive the treat.

Step 4. Remember to use your release cue of “all done” when you’re happy for your dog to come to you for attention again, and perhaps have a fun play with them as a reward.

Step 5. Gradually change up the room you do this in, to outside, in friends’ houses, then out in public. Eventually with a bit of practice that ‘settle’ means “have a lie down and/or relax until I am able to give you attention”.

Practical Use and Child Development



This training is also ideal if you want to incorporate your dog into your child’s bedtime routine; helping them get off to sleep by having their dog settled calmly on their bed, and perhaps giving some deep pressure too. Remember to **never leave your dog and child alone** without supervision—this includes over night.

See **‘Bedtime routine’** handout for more information.

Your dog can also be taught to settle under the table to help children concentrate on eating a meal or doing their homework; some children like the sensory feedback of running their toes through the dog’s coat.