



**teach  
YOUR DOG**



**“Go to Mat”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To teach your dog to go to a specific place such as a portable mat

**INSTRUCTION:**

1. Get a towel or a flat dog bed or mat of some kind (Target has excellent inexpensive ones, make sure you use a flat, NOT fluffy one) and act VERY interested in it. Let your dog see you do this. Place the mat on the floor near you. The second that your dog shows any interest in it such as sniffing it, pawing it, etc. say “yes!” and place a treat **ON THE MAT**.
2. As long as your dog keeps interacting with the mat, mark the behavior and treat **ON THE MAT**. Any behavior that you get while the dog is on the mat is a behavior to mark and reward.
3. You will begin using two levels of treats once your dog is staying on the mat and offering behaviors. You will use either more of a certain treat or a higher value treat, when your dog offers a “down” as opposed to other offerings. That will show your dog that anything done on the mat is a good thing but a “down” gets the best stuff!
4. Once your dog is offering a “down” reliably, then use your release word and call him off the mat if need be. (do not use your recall cue) Use your party voice and make it fun, as any recall should be. But in this instance, do not treat your dog for coming off the mat. The release word will always signify the end of a behavior. You want the rewards to happen during any behavior, not after.
5. After your dog comes off the mat and you have acknowledged that, stand perfectly still and wait for your dog to show interest in the mat again. Once he does, resume step #3. Make sure it is very clear that it is being on the mat that causes the rewards to come. Once you get reliable downs again, go to step #4 again.
6. When your dog is showing a commitment to staying on the mat, start increasing the time between rewards. If he leaves the mat before you give a release cue, pick up the mat briefly and ignore him and then give him another chance. Once he is remaining on the mat until you issue a release cue, then start walking around the mat in a circle. Go in small steps according to your own dog’s personality. Some dogs will be too upset or excited if you move fast and some will be fine. Know your dog. After each step away at first, without a release cue, return quickly and drop another treat on the mat. It is important that your dog understand that the treats come only on the mat, whether you step away or not.
7. Once you reach the point that your dog is staying on the mat until you issue a release cue, even if you have stepped away quite far, you can then name this behavior. When you can, then pick up the mat and place it back down and say your desired name cue just as you are laying it down. Then mark the behavior. You will need several successions in order to associate the name with the behavior, but it will become clear with repetition. Name it whatever you want! Be creative. Go to Place, Go to Mat, Where’s Your Bed, Chill Out, etc. It only needs to mean something to you and your dog.
8. You should also leave your mat out as often as you can and reward your dog for choosing to lie on it. If your dog goes to the mat on his own, then he is free to come and go from the mat as he chooses. If you cue him to **GO TO MAT**, then you must be the one to release him from the mat.
9. While in every other aspect of your life with your dog, the treats should come directly from you, the mat is different. Any behavior done on the mat, requires that the treat be given by dropping it **ON THE MAT!** Make the mat the magic mat.



**AnimalFriends Thinking Outside the Cage**

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