

Search

5 Steps to Train Your Dog to "Go to Place"

By KPCT on 07/26/2011
 Filed in

What if instead of jumping around like a lunatic when the doorbell rings, your dog waits politely in a down position? Or, instead of circling the dinner table like a shark, your dog lies quietly in the other room? Training a dog to go to a specific place is one of the most useful behaviors. In the following exercise from her bestselling book, *Control Unleashed*, Leslie McDevitt explains how you can teach your dog the command "Go to Place."

Training Go to Place

1. Get a **mat**, blanket, dog bed, or towel – one that your dog has not seen before – and examine it as if it were the most interesting thing in the world. Then, without saying anything to your dog, put it on the floor near you. The second that your dog shows any interest (by looking at it, sniffing it, putting a paw on it), click or verbally mark the behavior, and put a treat on the mat.
2. As long as your dog continues to interact with the mat, keep on marking behaviors and putting treats on the mat. A dog that has been shaped before will quickly start offering various behaviors to see what gets rewarded. Any behavior offered on the mat is worthy. My preference is down, but I also want to reward sits or any other behaviors the dog is offering on the mat. So I use at least two kinds of treats when I train Go to Place. The highest value treat is for downs, the lesser value is for anything else. That way a dog does not learn that any behavior on the mat is wrong or unrewardable but that a down gets the better reward. It took my last puppy about three minutes to figure out that downs on a mat got cheese-flavored popcorn while sits on a mat got kibble; it was downs from then on.
3. Once the dog is offering the desired behavior on the mat, reward him in position, then give your release **cue**, and encourage him off the mat. You have various options here. You could call him, you could throw food a distance from the mat and tell him to get it, or (if he has become glued to the mat) you could walk him off with the leash.
4. The second the dog leaves the mat, all clicking, praising, and treating ends. Stand quietly and wait. Most dogs at this point will go back to the mat in an effort to restart the game. When they do, throw treats on the mat. Continue to reward everything, giving the highest value treat for a down. Remember that at this point in the game, you are rewarding the dog for thinking about the mat and returning to it. Don't wait for a down or any other particular behavior. Make sure he understands that it's the behavior of returning to the mat that is getting rewarded. Each time he returns to the mat, mark it, and treat him on the mat. Each time you release him from the mat, step back a bit farther so he has to take another step or two to get back to the mat to restart the game.
5. When the dog is committed to being on the mat, you can start increasing the time between rewards. If he leaves the mat before you give a release cue, pick up the mat for a minute and ignore him, then give him another chance. If he is confidently remaining on the mat until your release cue,



Mutt Mat

similar entries

- HAPPY TOGETHER: HOW TO TRAIN SUCCESSFULLY IN A MULTI-DOG HOUSEHOLD
- CLICKER TRAINING A 2 ON / 2 OFF CONTACT BEHAVIOR ON THE DOGWALK
- HOW TO KEEP YOUR DOG CALM WHEN THE DOORBELL RINGS
- HOW TO TEACH LOOSE-LEASH WALKING
- HOW TO CALM YOUR DOG BY PLAYING TUG

portland

- MAIN PAGE
- GETTING THERE
- HOTEL INFORMATION

washington dc

- MAIN PAGE
- GETTING THERE
- HOTEL INFORMATION

build a great relationship



learn more

Sign Up for our Newsletter

Sign up for our newsletters and get articles, new products, events, and exclusive deals sent directly to your inbox!

[Sign Up Today!](#)

[Log in here](#)

It should not take long for the dog to figure out that no matter what you are doing, he will continue receiving

you can start taking little steps around him. If you have an excitable dog, start by just bending your knees as if you are about to take a step. After each little movement you make, return and reward the dog if he has remained on the mat. It should not take long for the dog to figure out that no matter what you are doing, he will continue receiving rewards if he stays on the mat until you release him.

rewards if he stays on the mat until you release him.

Eventually three things will happen:

1. Your dog will figure out that downs are the most rewarded behavior on mats.
2. He will be able to move a reasonable distance away from you to the mat.
3. He will be confident remaining on the mat until you release him.

When you reach this point, you can add your cue – Place or whatever you want to call it. The cue "Place" should mean to go to a mat and lie there until released, so you don't want to start using it until all those behaviors are happening reliably.

The potential applications are endless

You can take a mat anywhere. You can use a mat to help generalize or transfer behaviors. You can send your dog to his mat when you let your guests in the door, or send your dog to a mat while you are eating dinner. You can use a mat to practice distance work in your living room or anywhere else, or make a pattern of mats and send your dog to them while practicing crosses on the flat. You can use a mat to teach fast downs and then transfer that behavior to the pause table. If your dog has the zoomies or other impulse-control issues such as grabbing your pant legs or biting you while running, you can place mats on course and send your dog to them after brief sequences, as my friend, agility instructor Deb Norman, would say, "to get a grip."

One of the all-time most useful, applications of Go to Place is as a management tool when students want to take a break from working, watch a friend's run, or listen to their instructor.

One of the all-time most useful, applications of Go to Place is as a management tool when students want to take a break from working, watch a friend's run, or listen to their instructor. Dogs that have the Go to Place behavior down to a science can lie on their mats quietly next to your chair.

So grab a mat and some treats and start training! Leslie McDevitt's versatile **Control Unleashed** program provides additional mat work exercises, as well as more practical tips for teaching your dog to relax, focus, and work off-leash reliably in stimulating or stressful situations. Check out the [clickertraining.com store](http://clickertraining.com/store) for a wonderful assortment of **mats**, too! Soon your "What if?" dreams will be reality as your quick-learning dog masters the "go to place" behavior and demonstrates it proudly in many convenient circumstances.

21 people like this. Be the first of your friends

G+

* [Add new comment](#) [Email this Company blog](#) [ShareThis](#)

[About Us](#) | [Wholesalers/Affiliates](#) | [For Businesses](#) | [For Shelters](#) | [For Veterinarians](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)
