



## Down- Different Methods for Different Dogs

Usually it's quite easy to lure a dog to lie down, but occasionally some dogs find this cue challenging, and getting a Down from them isn't as simple. We tend to encounter issues with small dogs, long-bodied dogs, and some of the larger very muscular dogs. Below you will find a few ways to help your student's dogs to perform Down in class and at home.

- **Use a soft/fluffy surface:** Some dogs prefer to avoid cold or hard surfaces. Ask your pet parent to try using a soft bed, towel, or blanket to teach Down. Once successful, you can gradually generalize this behavior to different, thinner surface textures and temperatures. For example, start on a thick dog bed, then move down to a comforter, then a towel, then a thin blanket, then a rug, and finally the cold floor.
- **Catching:** The easiest way to teach Down is to Mark and Reward when you catch them doing it; every dog eventually lies down. This process takes time so be patient and very observant, it will eventually happen. You can try a technique called "Bathroom Downs". You go into the bathroom with your dog, and about 20 yummy treats. Sit wherever you'd like and ignore your dog. Eventually they will get bored and lie down. The moment it happens, Mark and reward him, then toss a second treat so your dog has to get up to eat it. Then, go back to ignoring and wait for it to happen again. Usually by the seventh or eighth treat, your dog will start to catch on and you should be able to see them actively trying to figure it out and offering the Down. When you can predict when your dog will offer Down, you can insert the verbal cue right before the behavior happens. Once you see your dog actively trying to lie Down in front of you, start rewarding your dog only while they maintain position, then Release.
- **Shaping:** With your dog in a Sit position and at least 5-6 treats in your hand, begin to lure them into a Down. As soon as your dog bends or follows your hand with his head, even a little, Mark, Reward, and continue luring Down. Ideally your dog shouldn't pick their head up in between treats, they should just eat and continue following the next treat in your hand until they fully lie Down. Mark and Jackpot for the finished product while they maintain the Down position, then Release. This technique is particularly effective for dogs that give up quickly if they can't figure out what you are asking them to do.



- **Lure straight down from a Sit:** Starting in a Sit position, imagine a straight line from your dog's nose to the ground and let your dog chew a treat all the way down to the floor. If their back end comes off the floor, immediately pull your Lure hand away. Once your dog offers Sit, reintroduce the Lure hand and start again. This will teach your dog to keep their back end on the floor. Repeat this process until the dog's front legs go down along with its head. Once fully Down, Mark, Reward, and Release. Avoid moving your hand away from their nose too much or too fast, they might end up standing up to try and get the treat.
- **Lure down and away from a Sit:** Some dogs, particularly those with long legs, have an easier time performing this behavior when lured down and away from their snout. Starting on a Sit position, place a treat in front of your dog's nose. Then slowly move the treat down and slightly away from your dog. As their shoulders start to bend, continue moving down and away until the dog walks their front paws forward while keeping their back end on the floor. Once the front legs stretch and the dog's chest or belly touches the floor, Mark, Reward and Release.
- **Lure down and in towards from a Sit:** Some dogs have the tendency of keeping their front paws locked in position and will lie Down by sliding their rear ends back into a Down. Utilizing a smooth surface or a slick floor is helpful. First, start in a Sit position. Then place a treat at your dog's snout and slowly Lure down and in towards the middle of their front legs. When the dog slides and fully drops into a Down, Mark, Reward, and Release.
- **Lure down and to the side from a Sit:** Some long bodied, short legged dogs have a hard time laying down with some of the techniques mentioned above. One easy way to get your dog to offer Down, is by asking them to Sit, and then Luring from their nose towards their side in a downward motion. This will cause your dog to flop over on their side and into the Down. Once successful, Mark, Reward, and Release. The more you repeat this method, the less you will have to Lure to the side. Eventually, they will perform the behavior while luring down in a straight line.
- **Lure down and in from a stand position:** This is similar to your dog taking a bow, but you'll want their back end to eventually drop. This works great for long-bodied dogs and some of the tighter, muscular dogs. Start with the treat at the dog's nose and move it down and in towards the middle of his front feet. Once your dog lowers their front legs flat on the floor and keeps their hind legs up, Lure in a bit more until their back end drop, then Mark, Reward and Release. If your dog keeps



trying to give up or back up, slow your lure hand down, and increase your rate of reinforcement.

You can also Mark and Reward for a bow a few times.

- **Make a bridge:** This should always be your last resort method due to how difficult it is to fade. You can try Luring your dog to crawl under your leg, stool, etc. Mark and Jackpot the second they perform a Down, so that this position becomes valuable. Make sure that you only Mark and reward when they are fully Down, and they are not being forced by the bridge. **Remember! Your dog should NEVER be forced into a Down.** If they lay down and your leg is still touching them, you may lift your leg a little and Reward them as they maintain the Down position.

Be patient, be consistent, and HAVE FUN training with your dog. Not every method will work for every dog and getting frustrated can be detrimental to their learning. Give yourself and your dog a short break every time you feel it's necessary. Happy training!!