

## Lesson 5: Teaching Your Dog to Lie Down



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Why is it important to teach your dog to lie down on command? In a word: **control**.

A dog that is lying down is not chasing a cat, barking at other dogs, getting under your feet while you're trying to cook dinner, or otherwise being a pain in the neck when you want peace and quiet. Sometimes a dog, like a five-year-old child on a sugar rush, can get so wound up and full of energy they can get themselves into trouble. They need to calm down. A dog that will happily lie down when you ask him to will calm down, and is less likely to get himself (or his owner) into trouble.

This lesson uses methods similar to the ones you used when teaching your dog to sit. But it may take your dog a bit longer to learn to lie down on command than it did to sit on command. Lying down, after all, takes a bit more effort... and being asked to lie down when you're not even tired seems kind of silly, even to a dog. So it may take longer, but don't get impatient or discouraged.

As with other lessons, you need to decide what command you'll use. Remember, consistency is key with verbal commands; one word or phrase, one meaning. If you use "Down" for this lesson, you can't use "Down" to also mean "Get off the couch" or "Stop jumping on Aunt Mavis!" Many trainers use "lie down," but that's a bit too close to "get down." To make it easier on your dog, we recommend a totally different-sounding word: "Rest." We'll use that word in our training lessons.

So let's get on with the lesson.

## **Lesson 5: Teaching Your Dog to Lie Down**

Read this lesson first, and then practice it with your dog.

1. Load up your pocket (or a bag or pouch) with treats.
2. Take your dog to an area where there won't be a lot of distractions.
3. Put a treat in your hand and ask your dog to sit.
4. With your dog sitting and you squatting or sitting next to him, hold your hand with the treat about an inch from his nose and slowly move your hand straight down to the ground. **Important:** move your hand straight down, right below your dog's nose, being very careful not to move it away from him as this will cause him to get up and move toward it. We don't want that. (If that happens, just start over.)
5. Your dog should follow the treat down with his nose, and then lie down completely. You may need to hold the treat on the ground for a few seconds before he lies down. It may also help to tap the ground with your other hand. Be patient.
6. As soon as your dog lies down, immediately give the treat and verbal praise ("Good!")
7. Walk a couple of steps away to a new location.
8. Repeat Steps 3 through 7. Practice this a few times.
9. Did you notice you haven't told your dog to "Rest" yet? Just as you learned with the Sit command, do not give the verbal command until you can get him to lie down consistently by moving your treat-filled hand down to the ground. Once you're sure he's going to do this properly the next time you do that, say "Rest" in a calm, low voice a split second before you start moving your hand. When he lies down, immediately reward your dog with the treat and "Good!" praise.
10. Repeat this process five times, saying "Rest" in a calm, low voice just before he does so and rewarding his correct response.

### **If your dog doesn't do what you want**

If your dog backs up instead of lying down, try having him sit with his back to a corner, so he can't back up.

If your dog doesn't lie down all the way, repeat steps 3 through 7 but add this: place your other hand (the one without the treat) on his back, just behind his shoulders, and gently push him slightly sideways and downward as you move the hand with the treat down to the ground.

If your dog still doesn't want to lie down, try moving him to a rug. (Some dogs simply don't like lying on cold, hard surfaces.)

As with other lessons, make sure your dog is not too distracted...or nervous. He'll be more willing to lie down if he's calm and relaxed. If he's nervous or full of energy, postpone your lesson until he's settled down.

Remember to keep your tone of voice calm and low.

Remember, the instant he lies down, give the treat and praise ("Good!").

### **This Week's Homework**

Practice this lesson several times a day. Vary the time of day and location.

Also watch your dog when you're not practicing the lessons, and when he starts to lie down on his own, say "Rest" as he does so. Then quickly give him a treat and praise.

### **In Addition to Practicing This Lesson...**

- **Reinforce Lesson 4, Teaching Your Dog to Stay.** Vary the time of day and location. Make sure there are few distractions. Remember to use the same commands ("Stay," "Free") every time, using a low, quiet tone of voice.

Practice using your "stop" hand signal, making sure it's different from your "Sit" hand motion. Hold the treat in the hand you are NOT using for the "stop" signal.

Give instant praise and reward after just a couple of seconds by bringing the treat all the way to his mouth so he doesn't move to get it.

If that's consistently going well, try extending the amount of time for your dog to stay by a few seconds longer before being released.

**Important:** Don't be tempted to extend the stay any longer than a few seconds before you've built a very strong foundation with this command.

- **Reinforce Lesson 3, Teaching Your Dog to Come when Called.** Continue teaching your dog to come when called at various times throughout the week. Practice in various locations, at different times of the day.

Remember the priority is to teach him that coming to you is a wonderful thing that will make him very happy. Don't use the come command when what you'll do when he comes is something he won't like.

If he's responding well when you're 10 feet away, try moving about 20 feet away from your dog before asking him to come.

Resist the temptation to give the come command (“Come! Come! Come!”) more than once if your dog doesn’t immediately respond. Instead, go to your dog and show him the treat in your hand. Give the verbal command in an enthusiastic voice, turn and move away while clapping. Be sure to praise (“Good!”) as soon as he looks at you, and then reinforce generously with treats when he reaches you.

**Note:** Remaining calm and patient when being ignored is difficult for most people, but please don’t get frustrated if your dog doesn’t come every time you call him. Some dogs learn more slowly than others. Also, like children, dogs tend to become more willful as they get older, and may occasionally decide that whatever they are doing is more interesting at the moment than coming to you. Sometimes even walking over to him and showing the treat won’t work. Don’t get angry, don’t raise your voice, don’t repeat the come command over and over. Instead, gently take him by the collar or snap on the leash and lead him away from whatever he’s interested in and to the destination you want—then give him a praise and a wonderful reward.

The worst thing you can do is lose your temper and yell angrily at your dog.

If your dog ignores your come command but eventually does stop whatever he’s doing and comes to you on his own, you can say to him whatever you want to vent your frustration—as long as you say it in a loving, happy, singsong voice. “You stubborn little bastard. If you ignore me like that again I’ll sell your ass on eBay.” ☺ Remember, you’re saying this in a loving, happy voice. Pet your dog as you’re saying it. Make him happy he came to you. This little mental trick will help you feel better while still reinforcing your dog’s correct (though belated) behavior.

- **Reinforce Lesson 2, Teaching Your Dog to Sit.** By this time your dog should be responding to both the verbal and arm motion sit commands even when the level of distraction is fairly high. If your dog does so consistently, you can back off on the formal practicing of this lesson. But do continue the verbal praise (“Good!”) when your dog sits on command. Also use petting (make sure it’s the kind he likes) and play as rewards instead of treats. (An occasional treat is still a good idea.)
- **Have fun playing with your dog!** Don’t focus all your time together on training. Spend lots of quality time just enjoying each other’s company.

**Coming up next week: Lesson 6, Teaching Your Dog Not to Jump Up on People**