

[Dog Obedience Training - The Down Command](#)

The down command is the next lesson to teach in your dog obedience training schedule. It should be taught as soon as you and your dog have mastered the sit command.

The down command is a fundamental ingredient of your overall dog obedience training program. It provides the foundation for many other advanced commands/skills and establishes you as the leader in the relationship you share with your dog. The reason for this is that the laying down position is a submissive and somewhat vulnerable position for your dog to be in, especially when you are standing tall over the top of your dog.

The down command is a very handy tool you will come to rely on in many situations. Popping your dog down into the lying down position is great for times when you need to go into a shop or for occasions when there are small children around. It can take a bit of practice to reach this level, but it is worth the effort.

Learning The Down Obedience Command

When you are in the learning phase of teaching the down command, start out by making it simple for your dog, then slowly turn up the difficulty level.

- Move your training sessions to a public place.
- Increase the time you keep your dog in the down position.
- Bounce a ball around your dog when he is in the lying position, or scatter some food around him. The idea is that your "down" command will be so strong in your dogs mind, that none of these other distractions matter. He can only get up to chase the ball or eat the treats when you release him from the down command.

What you are trying to achieve with the down command is to have your dog quickly get down into the laying position, belly touching the ground and his front legs extended out in front.

In a familiar environment to your dog with no distractions, lets get started!

Down Command Technique 1 - Off Leash

- Put your dog into a sitting position.
- Grab your dogs favorite tasty treat and hold it a couple of centimetres in front of his/her nose. Move your hand straight down to the ground. Your dog should follow it down (you can praise and encourage him down). As soon as his belly hits the ground, with his legs out in front, lavish him with praise and give the treat.
- Repeat this action over and over in short sharp training sessions.
- When your dog is "getting it" and going down right away, you can add the verbal part of the command. I use "down" other people use "lay" or "drop", just choose the one you are comfortable with and stick to it (make it a one word command only). Add your command just before you start to move the treat towards the ground. This step is all about building an association in your dogs mind between the verbal "down" command and the act of him laying down.
- The idea is that eventually, after plenty of repetition and praise your dog will only require your verbal command, and not the treat in your hand to lure him down. Also, in time you will be able to start the command not only from the sitting position but from standing and in any situation you and your dog are in.
- When your dog is responding well to your verbal command, introduce some other variables which make the down command a little more challenging. Try the command as you go about your daily business, around other people or dogs and increase the duration of the command.

Down Command Technique 2 - On Leash

- Put your preferred collar and leash on your dog - I just use a nice leather buckle collar when teaching the down command.
- Place your dog into the sitting position and stand or kneel right next to him.
- Basically you are trying to guide or coax your dog into the down position. How you do this depends on the size and co-operation level of your dog.
- Always say your "down" command first, then immediately guide your dog down into the lying position. Grab hold of the leash and gently pull your dogs head down, at the same time guide him down by pressing down between his shoulder blades with the palm of your hand. You can also lift up your dogs front legs and extend them out in front of him, find the method which works best for you. Praise and encourage your dog all the way down. Then of course as soon as he's in the down position make it clear to him that you are happy with him and that he has done a good job.
- After lots of repetition your dog will respond to your verbal command only. Then try the command when your dog is in the standing position and in other settings. Make the command a little more challenging by adding some distractions and increasing the time he is required to stay in the down position.

Whichever method you choose to teach your dog the down command be consistent and keep at it.

When you are happy with your dog getting into the down position you will probably want to add a release command to it. This means that when you issue your down command, your dog goes straight down and is not permitted to get up until you issue another command. You can use "away" or "off you go" for this purpose.

About the Author

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