

Relaxing on a Mat



Why teach a mat behavior?



- This exercise is to teach your dog to associate feeling CALM while on its special mat.
- Over time, the mat represents safety and security. Good things happen there and no one will bother him or her when on their safe place
- Our goal for mat work is that your dog learns to voluntarily go to the mat and relax when people are busy, can't pay attention to them, or when there are things in the environment that may be a cause of anxiety.

Before you start:

- Find a quiet place to work in, away from other people, pets and distractions.
- Gather pre-cut treats of high value (pea size pieces of cheese or meats are good examples). If your dog loves their food, you can even use a portion of a meal for training.
- Choose a special comfy mat (throw rug, crate pad, blanket, etc.) that will be used specifically for this training
- Position a chair near and beside the mat.

Training steps:

1. Scatter 10 tiny treats on the mat while your dog is not in the room.
2. Bring your dog into the safe and quiet training place and let them discover and start to eat the treats.
3. As your dog is eating treats, quietly sit down in the chair beside the mat. Be careful not to step on or over the mat while the dog is eating.
4. Ignore the dog while it is eating the treats
5. Once the dog finishes the treats and is still on the mat, drop 10 tiny treats in a row at your dog's feet.
6. When done, your dog most likely will look to you for more treats.
7. Continue to ignore your dog, calmly stay sitting without direct eye contact but monitor with your peripheral vision.
8. When your dog voluntarily does any of the following:

Yawning, stretching, sitting or lying down while on the mat (these are behaviors of relaxation), be prepared to drop 10 more treats on the mat!

9. If your dog continues to voluntarily offer these behaviors, lessen the amount of treats to 2 or 3, and deliver them about ten seconds apart instead of all at once.
10. If your dog changes position to something less relaxing, like moving from a sit to a stand; wait for your dog to again sit, lie down, etc., and then re-start the same treat delivery.
11. Practice in short sessions no longer than 3---5 minutes
12. When you are finished with the session, let your dog leave the Safe Place before removing any uneaten treats

For a more thorough explanation of this exercise, please read:

http://media.wix.com/ugd/d098c3_560368c4784c4dc2abef3094eae87ec6.pdf

Note: Even though there are a lot of steps in this version, please know that you do not have to get through it all at once. Practicing a little bit every day will help you to progress with your dog's understanding of the mat.

For a video example of this exercise, please watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvSm62fmqSM&t=1s>