

Teaching a 'Send to bed'

We are going to teach the dog to go to bed on cue; not as a punishment but as a way of keeping the dog settled whilst we are busy doing other things or whilst we are eating a meal or if we have visitors.

The exercise is trained in two separate stages; the actual going to the bed; and the lying down on the bed and once both behaviours are fluent, we will add them together

The send to bed

1. Place a mat or blanket on the floor, directly in front of you. Be ready to click as soon as you place it on the floor if the dog glances at it. Look at the mat/blanket and watch your dog out of the corner of your eye.
2. Click your dog for glancing at the mat/blanket and reward by tossing the treat away from the mat/blanket.
3. After your dog has eaten his treat, he will come back to you. If he looks at the mat, again click and treat. Repeat this stage until he has looked at the mat three times in a row.
4. The next stage is to wait until he moves very slightly closer to the mat. If you are really observant, you may notice him just shift his weight off one paw, click for that and reward.
5. Now we need him to lift his paw. When he does, click and reward and repeat twice more.
6. Now we need him to place his paw a little closer to the mat. Just wait patiently until it happens, don't try and lure him with food. Let him work out what you want. When he does, click and reward and repeat twice more.
7. Now we wait until he puts one paw on the mat. Click and reward. Repeat twice more.
8. Now we wait until he puts 2 paws on the mat. Click and reward. Repeat twice more.
9. Now we wait for 3 paws on the mat (some dogs go straight to four paws on the mat, don't worry if this happens). Click and reward. Repeat twice more.
10. Now we wait until he puts 4 paws on the mat. Click and reward. Repeat twice more.
11. Now we take a step back from the mat and wait for the dog to go to it and put all 4 paws on it. Click and reward. Repeat twice more. Remember to throw the treat away from the mat so that the dog has to get off the mat to get the reward.
12. Take 2 paces away from the mat and click and reward your dog for 4 paws on the mat. Repeat twice more.
13. Continue one step at a time until your dog will go onto his mat from around 10 paces away.

Note that we haven't added a cue yet, and we won't until we know that the dog can reliably go to his bed and lie down. As we haven't yet added the lie down to the behaviour, we'll avoid giving a cue just yet. All we are doing is getting the dog happy to go away from you to his bed/blanket.

Lying down on the bed

1. Stand right next to the dog's bed and ask him to lie down. Click and reward when he does. We really want a relaxed down rather than a sphinx down so we may have to 'shape' this behaviour. When your dog lies down on his bed, put the treat on his nose and use it to turn his head towards his shoulder. As he follows the treat he should shift his weight allowing him to take a more relaxed position (he'll shift his hips to one side). Click and reward.
2. Repeat until the dog is offering you this relaxed down rather than the more formal down position. Add a different cue. As this is the position we want him to take after we've sent him to bed, then use 'Bed' as the cue for this position.
3. Gradually increase the time the dog remains in a relaxed down on the bed. Try to reward only when the dog looks relaxed not when he is in an alert position looking at you. Increase the time in 1 second intervals until you get to a minute and then in 5 second intervals until you get to around 5 minutes.

Once your dog is happily settling on his bed, you can then take a step away, call him to you and then wait for him to go to his bed and lie back down. Repeat several times, then move back one pace. Continue to increase the distance until your dog will go on his bed and lie down from around 10-15 paces. You can now add the cue of 'go to bed' or 'in your bed'. If your dog takes himself off to bed at any time, remember to reward him for it.

You can then gradually add distractions such as asking him to go to bed when you are eating, when you have guests around etc. Remember that as the distractions increase that we need to decrease the distance/make it easier so that the dog succeeds and then gradually build distance and duration back in again. Always keep your tone light, never harsh as being sent to bed is not a punishment.