

TRAINING RESOURCES



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THE “PLACE” COMMAND

The Place Command is one of the most beneficial commands you can teach your dog. I use the word “place” as in “go to your place”. Some people use “kennel” or “bed”, but “place” more exactly matches my mental image of what I want. I save “kennel” for an actual crate or cage, and “bed” for bedtime. If your dog is a counter surfer, a beggar at meal times, a door charger, constantly underfoot, jumps on the furniture or roams the house looking for things to get into, teaching a solid Place Command will take away ALL of those options and give your dog something else to focus his energy on. If your dog is stressed, anxious or nervous, teaching a solid Place Command will help your dog learn to cope with his surroundings. With practice, Place Command becomes a place of relaxation and self-calming for our dogs. They begin to understand that you, the human, their guardian, can handle things. All the dog needs to do is to take a deep breath and relax. With daily practice and slowly increasing the duration, your dogs’ state of mind will begin to go from busy/intense/anxious to calm/relaxed/chill.

The benefits of our dogs practicing daily Place time can be seen in other aspects of our dogs’ life. As their minds slow down and their concern for what’s going on around them fades, our dogs will begin to view their world from a calmer place. State of mind changes have a tremendous impact on how our dog processes and reacts to stimuli in their world.

Setting your dog up for Place

Teaching the “place” command is simple but slow work.

Place must be on something with a border or definite edge. Place can be anything - so long as it is raised slightly off the floor AND not a dog bed or something comfortable. Ideally you would have a box or something that is slightly raised and that is only big enough so that when the dog goes on it, she has to curl up into a ball to be comfortable. This is her "job" - to stay in place until you give her the command to "break". It is simple and takes repetition but ultimately if done consistently, you will be able to tell the dog to go to Place and she will stay there for as long as you want her to until you release her.

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- I prefer to use a slip lead - high and tight right behind his ears. Walk with The dog, changing direction frequently so that she learns she has to pay attention to YOU, not her surroundings. If she gets distracted, you just keep walking and sharply change direction and she will be pulled into the right direction - don't say "come on, or lets go" - just let your body movements communicate with her through the collar and lead.
 - Walk up to the box top and say strong but without emotion - "Place" - and lightly pull the dog up onto the box or whatever you are using for Place. When her fourth paw hits the box top say "Good" - again, no emotion. Ideally she will be food motivated and if she is, it is at this time you would give her a treat as her reward. When you are ready for her to do it again, have her come off the box by saying say "Let's go" or "Break", with a slight tug on the leash to get her to walk with you. Then, do it again....and again....and again...each time letting her sit on the box a little bit longer. Do this at least 6 times a day for at least 3 days. Then start telling your dog "place" before you take him there. After another day or two, your dog should be beginning to move towards the "place" when you say the word – or at least looking in the right general direction.
 - Ultimately you want to get to the point where you can drop the leash and let her sit on the box for a minute or so. If she steps off, you simply say "no" pick up the leash and put her back on "place". No emotion, no yelling, just matter of fact. Keep doing this.
 - The next step is to up the ante. Begin asking your dog to lie down each time he gets to the place. You can use the down command or you can lure him into the down using the treat, but now the dog only gets the treat for going to place and lying down. Once this concept is firm, start adding your release word to indicate that it's ok for your dog to get up. Start by asking him to stay down for 5 sec, remembering to praise effusively and use treats. You can help your dog at this phase by reminding him "down" or "place" as needed, or by using your "stay" hand signal. Work your way up to 30 sec or so.
 - When you are watching TV, cooking dinner, doing laundry, put her on place. If you step out of the room, put her on place. If she gets off the box, pick up the leash and put her right back on and go about your business. You will have to do this multiple times until she realizes that you mean business and that she must follow what you say. Each day you will work toward building her stamina for this which in reality is nothing more than giving her a "job"- it is not to protect you or watch you, it is to sit in place until otherwise told to break.
 - Now we need to ask for longer stays at the place. You may want to use a short leash to help remind your dog to remain in place at this point. (The idea behind using the leash is to make it easier for your dog to succeed. The leash should be just long enough to allow your dog to sit comfortably and move a bit, but should keep one foot

on the mat at all times.) Ask your dog to go to his place during a commercial break while you watch TV. Attach the leash once your dog is in position. You may pet, praise, and treat your dog throughout the commercial break. At the end of the break, or slightly after, give one last treat and release your dog, remembering to unhook the leash! Once your dog is comfortably staying put for 5 minutes, decrease the frequency of petting, praise and treats gradually over 3-4 sessions until you are praising or petting once during the 5 minutes and treating just before releasing your dog. Begin increasing the duration of stays in place until your dog is staying there through an entire 30 min. show.

- Once you can get to 30 min. without your dog breaking, with you right next to him, start moving farther away. Remember to keep going to him intermittently to praise and even treat. As you get farther from your dog, he will become more anxious and the exercise will become more difficult. You need to help him succeed. At first, he may only be able to tolerate you being away from him for a few seconds. That's OK. You do, however, need to remember not to reward anxious behavior. If your dog tries to leave his place or begins to show other signs of anxiety, go back to him and remind him gently what he is supposed to be doing, leave his side for a few seconds less than the last departure, and treat and praise him. You may want to just leave his side 2 or 3 times during 30 min. for a few sessions and then work up to longer departures, further away.
- When you can ask your dog to go to place and he will stay there while you get up and move around the room, or while you sit across the room from him, without using the leash, it is time to expand your dog's view of what the command means. Put down mats in several areas of the house, and ask him to use each one as place. Remember that each new area of the house that "place" is in constitutes a WHOLE NEW EXERCISE, so you must go back to the beginning again, asking for a few seconds at a time. Each time you begin the exercise anew, it should progress more rapidly. After you have taught the command several places indoors, begin working on the command outdoors, in the park, wherever you can take a mat.

Teaching the "place" command gives you an easy, positive way to get your dog off of the furniture, out of a guest's face, or out from under foot. You must, however, remember never, ever to use "place" as a reprimand. You may ask your dog to go to his place when you are frustrated with him, but you must not ask him to go in a negative fashion. Also remember that your dog is ALWAYS a good dog when he is lying quietly in his place.

If you have difficulty getting your dog to stay on his mat, you may be attempting to progress too rapidly and may be pushing him too hard. Back up and make the exercise simpler -- ask for a shorter stay, practice with fewer distractions, stay closer to your dog, increase the frequency of verbal praise or treats

Personal excerpt from Jody: I had a dog that was so anxious she was almost impossible to control. After about a month of place training, she is able to sit on her box for HOURS at a time and simply sleep. It is her job and she loves it. The box is now a comfy place to lie down (I transitioned to a bed), her crate is her haven and she is totally balanced. Place is not a punishment, crate is not a punishment, it is a job and we need to realize that absent a job, dogs will make bad decisions b/c they don't know exactly what is expected of them, particularly if they are at all anxious.

The how too video is here: www.thegooddog.net. The Place video can be found under "Free Training Videos". <http://thegooddog.net/photos-videos/training-videos/#!prettyPhoto> The video is about 20 min long and will show step by step how to teach your dog the Place command. He uses a flat mat for Place - I prefer something like discussed above. It forces the dog to really think about what he has to do to get comfortable as opposed to focusing on his surroundings.