



Mat Work

The first night of class, come into the training area and find a spot. Have a seat, lay your mat down and start doing mat work right away. This will help keep you and your dog engaged with something familiar and fun to do.

EXERCISE #1: Mat Work

***This exercise is to be practiced at home BEFORE coming to class. Each practice session takes about 10 minutes.*

PROGRESSIVE GOALS OF EXERCISE:

- ♥ To have your dog CHOOSE to come towards the mat –or- be LURED to the mat.
- ♥ To have your dog touch or stand on the mat.
- ♥ To have your dog stay on the mat. ****END GOAL FOR PRE-CLASS HOMEWORK.**
- ♥ To have your dog sit (or lay) on the mat.
- ♥ To have your dog sit/lay and stay on the mat.
- ♥ To have your dog sit/lay, stay, and be relaxed on the mat. The mat then can travel with you and become a place where your dog feels safe and is relaxed.

NOTES:

- This is a shaping exercise. What's shaping? Well, if you played the game Hot and Cold as a kid, that is an example of shaping. You aren't telling or showing what you want, only giving encouragement and feedback. This is a fantastic method of learning.
- Don't talk! People talk way too much when training dogs and muddle the meaning of commands. (EX: Down = lay down –OR- get off the couch. It can't mean both.) Keep chatter to a minimum. The best way for your dog to learn is to "figure it out." This increases confidence and enhances the dog/human bond.
- Mat work gives your dog a reference point in different places. This can help if s/he is nervous or fearful of going to new places such as a veterinary clinic, grooming salon, or training class. Dogs don't "generalize" well, which means if they "sit" at home (a familiar environment), they might not "sit" at the vet clinic because it's a new environment. The mat is a constant and something familiar while they are being introduced to a new experience. Use this exercise many times over and in many creative ways to help your dog feel confident and relaxed in unfamiliar situations.

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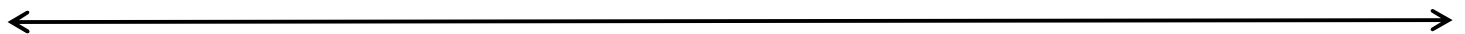
1. Find a mat, rug or towel that is big enough for your dog to lay down on. A mat with rubber backing is preferred so it doesn't move around. Bring this "mat" to class every night.
2. Get some nice, yummy, stinky treats and keep them in your treat bag or pocket.
3. Go to a quiet room or small, confined area and put a sturdy chair in the middle. Place the mat in front of the chair (about 2-3 feet away from the chair) and sit in the chair.
4. Bring your dog into the room/area and allow him/her to investigate. Do not say or do anything, just allow your dog to wander and investigate.



- If the dog comes towards you or the mat, say GOOD, which should result in your dog coming closer.
- When your dog touches the mat (with 1 or more paws), say YES! and give a treat from your hand. This is the first big goal! If your dog put all four paws on the mat, SCORE! YES!, praise, and treat accordingly.

5. If after 2-3 minutes (yes, minutes) your dog does not come towards the mat, say his/her name and toss a treat onto the mat. You can also point to the mat, move a bit – something to get your dog's attention. Remember:
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6. Most dogs will move off the mat. **Wait** for your dog to come back to the mat. If s/he doesn't, repeat #5 again...and again until s/he gets it.
7. If your dog stays on the mat, say YES! and reward. After a few rewards, get up and walk away so your dog leaves the mat and start the exercise (#5) over.

NOTE: The END goal is to have the dog sit (or lay) on the mat, but for now, we want your dog to come to the mat with ease. If your dog doesn't automatically sit, that's okay; we'll work on this in class. However, if s/he does and *IF* your dog easily comes to the mat, trying holding out for a sit, but don't push it. BE PATIENT and reward the small steps!



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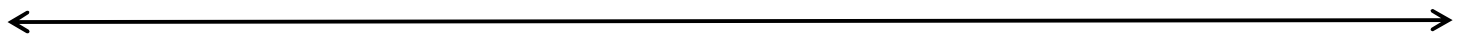
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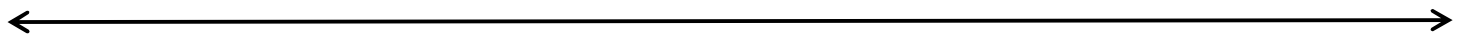
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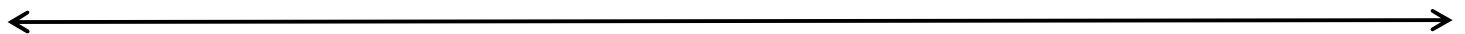
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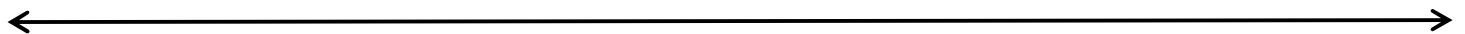
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