

# Go To Your Mat

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**The principles outlined in this handout are intended as a general guide only. If your dog has shown aggressive behaviour toward you, your family or other people, you should speak with the instructor listed at the top of this handout.**

The Go To Your Spot command is a fantastic behaviour to teach your dog.

I find the "Go To Your Bed" or "On Your Mat" command to be one of the most useful and most used of all of the dog obedience commands. It is great for practical and also safety reasons - I find myself calling on this command in many situations everyday including:

- When **visitors arrive at my home**. Instead of my dogs getting all excitable and jumping all over guests I use the "Go To Your Bed" command to redirect their behaviour.
- If a dog is barking excessively you can call on this obedience command which acts as an **alternate behaviour for your dog to perform**.
- When myself and my family sit down for a meal I send my dogs to their spot to give us a bit of space.

One thing to always keep in mind when applying the Go To Your Spot command is that you **don't want it to feel like a punishment to your dog**. In other words don't use it when your dog is in trouble, try to make it a comfortable, rewarding, positive, fun place for your dog to retreat to.

Follow the steps below to build the Go To Your Spot command slowly. Start out so it's easy for your dog to understand, then **gradually make it harder** by adding other variables (duration, distance and distractions).

## Go To Your Spot - Step by Step

**1. Choose your designated spot (make sure it's a nice and comfortable place), attach a label to it ("Go To Your Bed" "Go To Your Mat" etc.) and stick with it.**

**2. Stand with your dog about 1-2 meters from the chosen spot. Say "Go To Your Bed" while pointing towards the spot.** At the same time throw one of your dogs very favorite treats onto the bed. Your dog is sure to rush over to the bed to collect the tasty treat. As soon as he/she collects the treat be sure to **praise her enthusiastically**.

**3. Repeat step 2 many many times to reinforce the behaviour.** This also builds a connection in your dogs mind between you saying "Go To Your Bed" and pointing with the act of going over to her bed. At this point it's important to note that the **treat is acting as a lure to entice your dog over to the bed** - this will eventually change.

4. Now gradually increase the distance between where you and your dog are standing and the bed. Continue to practice "Go To Your Bed", point, throw the treat and then praise.

5. It's now time to change the job of the treat from being a lure to being a **reward for the desired behaviour**. It goes like this - say "Go To Your Bed" while pointing towards the bed, but this time do not throw the treat. By now your dog will most probably understand that your verbal command and pointing means that you want her to go to her spot. If she responds to your command by going to her bed you then give the treat (rewarding the behaviour) and **lavish her with praise**. If your dog doesn't "get it" go back a step by using the treat as a lure again.

6. Continue step 5 over and over again. You can **practice at any time throughout the day**, it doesn't have to be a set training time. Also mix up the place where you request your dog to "Go To Your Bed". Say it close to the bed, then further away and eventually even from a different room (don't move too fast though).

7. You can now add other elements to this command. One at a time you could add a distraction such as having **another person in the room bouncing a ball** or put your dogs food bowl down then request the "Go To Your Bed".

8. You may choose to ask your dog to "drop" on the mat and then teach them the word "settle", every time they are lying quietly on their mat.

9. After a while you should **fade and vary your rewards**. You can give the treat every second or third time your dog goes to her bed, or you could throw a ball for her to chase as the reward instead of the tasty treat.

Remember to keep it fun and **build the "Go To Your Spot" command piece by piece over a period of a couple of weeks**. If you are consistent and show a little patience, you and your dog are sure to achieve a great result.