

Down

Level 1: Follow a Target to a Down Position

Purpose:

The purpose of this exercise is to shape the dog to lie down by following a target—a stick or a finger.

Dog Skills

Targeting
Respond to a cue

People Skills

Shaping
Cuing

Steps:

1. Begin with the dog in a sit position (please don't say "sit" but you may use your hand cue)
2. Position the target so that the dog has to dip his head slightly to touch the end of the target; click and treat.
3. Gradually shape lower target touches, clicking and treating each correct response until the dog will touch the target placed on the floor.
4. Move the target forward an inch or two so the dog stretches to touch it. If the dog stands up, remove the target.
5. As alternatives, push the end of the target toward the dog between his paws, which will cause him to slide back into a down, or draw the dog under a chair or your bent legs.

Click Points

Touch target.
Head stretching toward target.
Tummy on the floor.

Good for developing these other behaviours:

Down Levels 2–4, stay, settle on mat or in crate, drop on recall.

At home fun:

Capture spontaneous downs, clicking and treating just as the dog's tummy hits the ground. If you don't have a clicker handy, use a mouth click or "yes" and reinforce.