

## Down

### What does the behavior look like?

When cued, the dog will move into a position in which his chest is on a floor surface and legs are contracted and level with the surface. In a **sphinx down**, the dog's legs are tucked evenly to each side of the stomach and the dog's hips are level. In a **settled down**, the dog shifts his weight onto one hip and both legs are extended to the left or right, depending on the hip's position.

### Why should we learn it?

"Down" can be used in a variety of settings and environments. This is a behavior most useful in environments where the dog may be asked to maintain a body position for a long duration.

### Training:

#### **Capture the Down:**

When the dog is already in a down, say "Good Down" then mark the behavior and reward.

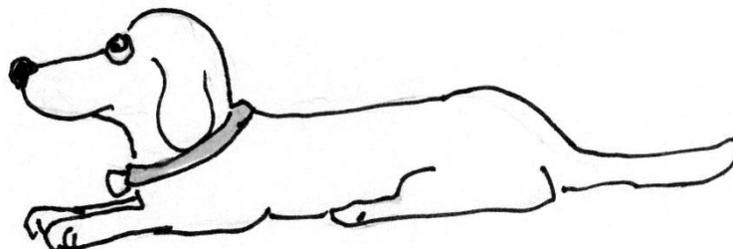
#### **Lure the Down:**

1. Get the dog's attention. Start out by standing in front of him.
2. With the dog in a sit or a stand and a lure in your hand, place it next to his nose. Slowly bring the lure straight down in front of the dog allowing him to track the lure all the way to the floor surface.
3. Say "Down" as the dog lies down. Avoid saying "Down" over and over again.
4. Mark the behavior or click, if using a clicker, and present the lure as the reward for the behavior. (Please review our **Marker & Release Cues** handout.)
5. Duration of the behavior can be achieved by keeping the rate of reinforcement steady while the dog is sitting.
6. After a few seconds, say your "Release" cue.

#### **Shape the Down:**

Not all dogs are able to drop immediately into a down with the lure method. Some dogs benefit from the slow lowering of the body position over several sessions. This method is called SHAPING (small incremental movements progressing toward the end behavior or successive approximations of the final behavior).

1. Note how much of a bend in the front elbow of the dog you are able to get before the dog pops up out of position.
2. Lure slightly lower each time, delivering the reinforcement (treat) in each new location.



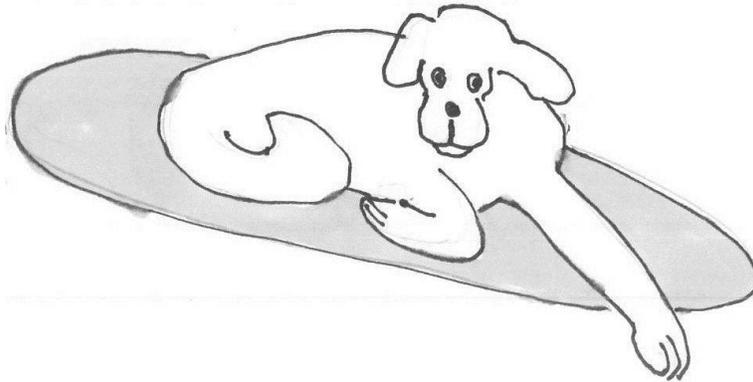
**Advanced Training and Application:**

***Teaching a Settled Down from a Sphinx Down***

In a **sphinx down**, while the dog is learning the behavior, deliver the food rewards to the dog (or petting/verbal praise calmly) so they do not have to move out of position.

In a **settled down**, initially place the rewards (food) to the dog's mouth, then to floor between the dog's front legs and finally placed in the center of the "C" as the dog relaxes more into the settled down.

1. Place a food lure, against your dog's nose and allow the dog to track the lure.
2. Lure the dog's head low and slightly back toward one shoulder until the dog's hips switch from even weight distribution to the left or right.
3. Say your marker word when the dog's hips switch position and provide the reward.
4. This type of down can be cued differently, i.e. "Settle." You can say the "Settle" cue as the dog is moving to the settled down.



***Losing the Lure***

Food in your hand will become part of the cue if care is not taken to lose the food lure as soon as possible.

1. Following the steps above to get the initial behavior of "Sit," keep your hand in the same shape as if you had a lure and cue the behavior.
2. Pull a treat from the treat bag and present to the dog so they do not have to move out of position.
3. Try a process of using a food lure three times, and the fourth time without a food lure.

***Building Duration Using Your Release Cue***

Duration comes as a result of a clear understanding of the preceding behavior and the "Release" cue. But as with any new behavior, building duration should be done slowly. The use of a "Stay" cue adds an unnecessary level of complexity to the behavior.

1. Cue the dog to do a "Down."
2. You can generally control duration using a steady rate of reinforcement.
3. Three to four seconds before cueing the "Release," end the reinforcements.
4. Say your "Release" cue and move slightly to invite your dog to move out of the down.

**Training Tips:**

- If using food rewards, place them in a position that does not cause the dog to move out of the down to access the reward.
- Some dogs are able to access a food lure on the ground without having to bend. For these dogs, and in general for smaller dogs, you can place the dog on a staircase landing/elevated platform. With the dog on this elevated surface, the handler can place the lure below the platform so the dog has to bend down below the level he is on to get the food reward.
- Build duration first (and slowly) before adding other distractions like handler movement near the dog or another dog, bouncing ball or other environmental stimuli.

**Training Resources:**

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training** conducts various training classes. Sign up on our [Behavior & Training](#) page for the next available class series.

We also provide **Dog Training Instructors** and **Consultants** available for private training or consultations (on-site or in-home) at 415.506.6280 or [OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org](mailto:OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org).

**Remember to license your dog (It's the LAW)!** If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog's collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by **Marin Humane**, visit us at [MarinHumane.org](http://MarinHumane.org) or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.