

## Platform & Mat Training

### What are they?

A platform is an approximately two inch thick piece of rectangular shaped equipment made of wood or other material and covered with a non-slick surface. Platforms come in a variety of lengths and sizes.

A mat is a square of material, often a carpet square remnant, towel or even a bed.

### Why are they used?

The platform is used to help dogs learn how to collect their bodies when performing a stationary behavior. Platforms and mats give a dog a place on which to execute behaviors. A platform is also used to provide visual information to a handler when her dog executes behaviors like a straight "Sit" or "Stand" in place.

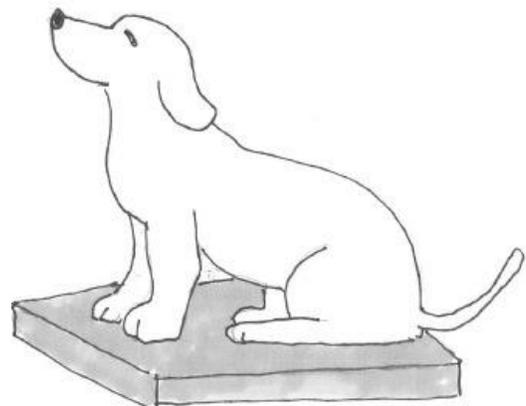
A mat can be used to give a dog a place to settle instead of doing other behaviors like jumping on visitors. A portable mat helps a dog settle in new places.

### Training:

Many dogs are hesitant to approach a platform or mat, so take your time to develop this behavior. The choice to approach the object should be driven by your dog.

#### ***Platform training:***

1. Pick up the platform and hold it. When your dog looks at you in response, mark and reward by tossing a treat away from the platform. Remove the platform.
2. Pick up the platform and hold it again. When your dog approaches the platform, sniffs it or otherwise shows additional interest, mark and reward by tossing a treat away from the platform.
3. Pick up the platform and let your dog see you lay it flat. Mark and reward any interest your dog shows in the platform such as sniffing or looking at it. Toss the treat away.
4. Once your dog is fine with the platform and is not actively avoiding it, place a treat on the platform, mark your dog eating the treat on the platform and toss one away from the platform.
5. As your dog turns back toward the platform, place another treat on the platform. Let your dog eat it and again, toss a treat away.
6. As your dog approaches the platform, gently toss a treat across the surface of the platform to the other side of it. Mark the moment your dog steps over or on the platform. Keep doing this across the platform behavior until your dog shows no indication of avoidance of the behavior.
7. Use a lure to have your dog step onto the platform from one end. Mark for stepping onto the platform and toss a treat away from the platform. As your dog loops back toward the platform, lure him back onto the platform



8. Once your dog is comfortable approaching and being lured onto the platform, mark and reward your dog for being on the platform.

**Mat training:**

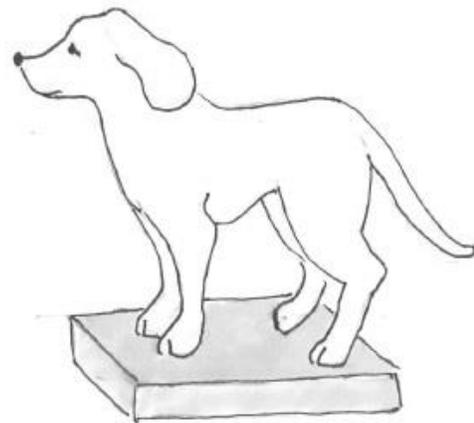
The above steps can be used to develop your dog's initial approach and engagement with the mat or bed. Once your dog is comfortable on the mat or bed, the handler can toss treats onto the bed or reward in place on the bed.

1. Toss a treat onto the bed and say "Bed" as you point and let your dog gather the treat.
2. With your dog on the bed, mark and reward your dog as he is on the bed.
3. With your dog on the bed, cue a "Down" and reward your dog for staying on the bed.

**Advanced Training and Application:**

**Building non-verbal cues:**

The platform becomes a non-verbal cue that "We are Working on Something". If the platform is in the environment, the handler and dog should be working with it together. Once your dog is comfortable on the platform, the handler can position herself around it to help your dog learn how to sit straight in front or at the handler's left or right side.



Using a mat, you can create a portable bed for use in public areas. Place the mat under a table or an out of the way space and ask your dog to "Down" on the mat. Reinforce your dog for staying on the mat by placing treats on the mat.

**Building duration and distance:**

1. Once your dog is comfortable on the platform and easily able to do behaviors on it, build duration on the platform to help your dog learn they have a place to do behaviors.
2. A dog who has been taught to stay on a platform is easier able to understand "Stay Here" while the handler moves away.
3. To build distance targeting the platform, from a distance the handler can "Send" your dog to the platform on which behaviors can then be cued.

**Building an understanding of "place":**

Once your dog is able to comfortably interact with the platform, he can be cued to move between different positions while standing on the platform (in place). Likewise, cueing different behavior positions from a distance can be developed.

**Troubleshooting:**

- If your dog is afraid to go on the platform, use a more stable low surface like a yoga mat or towel before introducing the elevated platform.

- If your dog sits crooked on the platform, you should slow down the speed of luring and have your dog's approach to the platform be straight. Wait until your dog's head, neck, spine and tail are straight before giving the "Sit" cue.

**Safety Concerns:**

Avoid placing a dog on a platform that is too high or unstable as to injure or scare your dog should he place his full weight on it.

**Training Resources:**

Platforms can be made at home using boards and yoga mats. For other equipment needs please visit the Marin Humane's **Animal Outfitters Store**. Stop by our store or visit us online at: [Animal Outfitters](#). Please call 415.506.6229 to verify available stock.

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.