



Magnetize to a Mat

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To help your pup find value in moving to and remaining on a mat, we start by “magnetizing” him to the mat — in other words, making the idea of being on the mat very appealing.

Our goal for Part 1 is that our dogs are easily **choosing** to move onto the mat **on their own**, and settling into a down while we’re next to the mat. We add a cue in Part 2, and begin changing our orientation and distance to the mat in Part 3.

Part 1 — Reinforcing moving to the mat

- Sit or stand next to the mat, with treats/kibble. on you or nearby. You are looking at the mat, versus looking at your dog.
- When he steps onto the mat, click or mark (yes!) and place 5 or so treats/kibble **on the mat**, one at a time. **Make a bit of a production about it!**
- Next, toss a treat/kibble off the mat as you say a release cue — such as “okay!” or “free!”. A release cue tells your dog that they can leave the mat.
- Look at the mat and when he returns to the mat, click/mark and treat 5 times again on the mat.
- Once your pup has returned to the mat reliably a few times, pause to see if he will offer a sit. If this happens, click/mark and reward!
- When he is reliably offering a sit on the mat, pause and see if he’ll offer a down.
- There is a bit of an “art” to figuring out how long to wait for your dog to choose to sit or lie down once they’ve arrived on the mat, before you simply reward for being on the mat. You want give them enough time to think for a moment and figure out what behavior might earn them something; but you also don’t want to wait so long that they get frustrated and wander off the mat.
- Practice at this level until you have a dog who, after being released to eat the kibble tossed off the mat, is reliably choosing to return to the mat and settle down.

Part 2 — Adding a cue

- You can add a verbal cue — such as “go to your mat” or just “mat” or “place,” etc., — just as he is moving towards the mat and about to step on it.
- Continue to be **generous** with the reinforcement (treats/kibble)! You want him to see his mat as that place where lots of great treats show up.

Part 3 — Changing your orientation and distance to the mat (eventually be able to send your dog to the mat from just about anywhere)

Don't be in a rush to challenge your dog with changing your orientation and distance to the mat — make sure he is getting on the mat happily and easily before you make it harder!

- Distance: Only after he has successfully done a series of repetitions while you are next to the mat should you begin to **slowly** increase your distance from the mat when you say the cue. Think of this part of the training as “even though I'm 2 steps from the mat, can you still . . . ?”
- Orientation: Change your orientation to the mat **slightly** when you give the cue. This teaches your pup that he gets rewarded for going onto the mat and lying down, no matter where your body or face is pointed.

Pro Tip:

To up the ante and really make the mat THE place to be, give your pup a kong or other stuffable toy filled with part of his meal while he's on the mat.

Video Resources:

Sarah Owings, How to Teach a Hyper Puppy to Settle on a Mat:

<https://vimeo.com/161044727>

Sarah Owings teach a Dog to Go To Mat (round the clock):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTFKWdEr95g>

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