

# Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

## Golden Rule Training

### Teach Your Dog to Down -Stay

There are four parts to this exercise, focus, down, stay and release.

1. Use the focus cue to get your dogs attention.
2. Take 2 treats and hide them behind you back, one is for the *down* and one for the release. *Pick a release word you and your family will agree on and use consistently, such as "okay", "release", or "free."* The release word lets the dog know it can move about freely.
3. For the down cue:
  - a. Use the food lure technique to show the dog what you want him to do. Take a treat and hold it between your fingers so the dog can smell it, but not grab it.
  - b. When at the nose say "down" and draw the treat straight down to the floor and out (in an "L" shape). The idea is for the dog to follow his nose and put his elbows on the ground followed by his hind-quarters to complete the down.
  - c. Some dogs are sensitive to the cement, carpet, grass, etc. Therefore, you may want to try on different surfaces to see if that makes a difference.
  - d. If he does part of the down, he still gets a reward for trying! We always want them to be successful.
  - e. Give him the treat and praise by saying "good" or "good down"
  - f. After 3 attempts, if he does still not understand what you want, then take a break or work on something else and come back to the "down" later.

*Note: Most dogs will follow the treat with their eyes and track it with their nose, causing their muzzle to point where they are guided. "Down" is more difficult for a dog to learn. Remember, down is a submissive position, **please do not down your dog in public!** You could cause anxiety or even aggression if your dog feels vulnerable; just be aware of the surrounding and never force your dog into a position.*

Encourage him to stand up again and repeat the step above until your dog readily follows the food lure and goes into the down position when you say "down." Practice 3 to 4 times, and then take a break. The dog will lose interest if asked to repeat one cue over and over.

## Teach Your Dog to Down-Stay

Once your dog has mastered the "down" cue, you're ready to teach him to stay on cue. He will learn that when you say "down," he should maintain the position he's in until you release him with your release word (ok, free, release, etc.)

The stay is quite useful to us, but not easy for some dogs to learn. Be sure to use good treats, such as little cubes of chicken, low-fat cheese, bits of sliced hot dog and freeze-dried liver. When teaching your dog the down-stay cue, you're asking him to do something that may not make much sense to him. You're asking him to stay somewhere while you leave his side, which is something dogs never ask of each other unless they don't particularly like each other. So reward him well as he is in the learning phase!

Find a quiet place to train where your dog won't be easily distracted. You may need to use a leash and step on it so you have more control and your hands are free to give the treats quickly (in class this is useful, while at home it may not be necessary). When you use the "down" and "stay" cues say them once, do not keep repeating them. Always pause between cues, say "down" wait 3 seconds, then start the "stay" cue.

1. Have about 10 treats ready in each hand behind your back (have treats in each hand and alternate so the dog does not know which hand they will come from; this keeps him focused).
2. Stand right in front or to the side of your dog and say "down", as the dog downs, wait 3 seconds and say "stay", and then give her one treat from each hand from your back rapidly as you say "stay" for a few seconds. Hanging over the top of your dog may not work and can be intimidating, try squatting next to him.
3. Then release him with your release cue, (ok, free, release, etc.) and toss a treat to the side so he follows the treat and is free to move around.
4. If he breaks the stay, say "eh-eh" or "no" and put them back into a sit and start over.
5. Remember to use your release word once and when the dog is successful, this signals the exercise has been completed.

Hint: Because "down" is not easy to learn and is a vulnerable position for a dog, try asking your dog to down while you are beside him and not in front of him. There may not be enough room for him to down successfully in front of you. If it's hard for you to squat next to your dog while teaching down and down-stay, sit in a chair as you feed treats to him and as you reinforce "stay".

## The 3 D's!

### Increasing Duration

The goal is to have your dog be in a reliable stay until you release him. You should move around, eventually moving out of his eyesight while in stay (this is duration, distance and distraction)!

Repeat the stay exercise, slowly stretching out the time that your dog must stay between each release cue and the delivery of a treat (duration). To increase the duration, ask your dog to stay for two seconds. Then increase to five seconds. Then try for ten seconds, and so on. Eventually you can get up to several minutes with a reliable stay.

## **Increasing Distance**

Once you have worked on duration, your goal is to teach your dog to stay while you move away from him a little at a time. After you and your dog have mastered the down and down-stay, you can start to move away from your dog, creating distance. Remember to progress slowly, which helps your dog gain confidence and be successful.

Gradually increase the number of steps you move away from your dog, always coming back to him to deliver treats while he holds the stay. Remember to end the stay by saying your release cue and giving him a treat.

While working on duration, make sure you are not also working on distance or distraction. Make sure your dog is successful at each step as you progress. For example, if your dog is at a reliable 60 second stay, then bring him back to 10 seconds as you work on distance.

As you take more steps away from your dog, you can start to increase the time you ask your dog to stay while you're away from him. During the stay, return to your dog and give him treats. For example, take two steps away from your dog, pause for three seconds, say "Good" and return to give her a treat, take two steps away from your dog again, pause for three seconds, return to reward, pause again, and then release your dog. This will build the duration of the stay.

## **Increasing Distraction**

Finally, your goal is to teach your dog to stay in different places. However, with down, there will not be too many distractions he is not used to in your home. Once your dog has mastered the "stay" in familiar and quiet places, then practice the cue in the backyard to increase the focus and distraction. First, practice the stay in different rooms of your house, then move to the backyard. Don't ask your dog to stay for very long, and don't move very far away from him in the beginning.

## **As you progress**

When your dog is learning a stay cue make sure to reward often to encourage the stay. Then start to decrease the treats over time; you will know when you can reduce the treats when you have a more reliable stay as you add a little more time.

As you work on duration and want to add distance, shorten the time you are asking for and increase the distance. Eventually, you will get a long stay with a long distance (up to 30 feet). You will know your dog's threshold when he moves before you release him. Say "eh-eh" and put him back in the down and start over. Make sure your dog is successful before adding time or distance to the request.