

Teaching Your Dog to “Settle”

Working dogs like German Shepherds need “a job”: mental stimulation, physical exercise, training for good manners and obedience and some of them need to be taught to stop.

Teaching your dog to “Settle” allows them to relax in different situations, allowing you to enjoy a cup of coffee, a Zoom meeting, or dinner out with friends.

Start this exercise at home under normal circumstances. Find a time when you have about 20 minutes to be still yourself. Put your dog on leash and sit on it giving them enough slack to move around a little, ask them to “down” and you be still. If your dog gets up you can ask to “down” again, reward for the down. If they get up repeatedly, ignore them and wait for them to realize you aren’t moving. When they do lay down again, reward quietly for that. If using treats put them right under their nose so they don’t get up. Continue this for about 20 minutes total. Usually before the exercise is over the dog will have an understanding of what you want. If it doesn’t go well the first time, the next time you try the exercise the dog often has a quicker understanding and compliance.

Practice this a few times at home. Meal time can be another nice time to try it. Add the command to “Settle” when you feel the dog has an idea what you want.

When you feel the dog has a good understanding, try it away from home. This can be as simple as stopping to chat with a neighbor when you’re out on a walk. Each different and more distracting situation will take some adjustment time but the more you do it the more success you will have.

