# Teaching Your Dog to Relax

A Step-by-Step Conditioned Relaxation Guide

## 1 Set up your space

Choose a quiet spot with a bed, mat, or cot. Remove distractions and practice in the same place each day.



## 2 Help your dog settle

Sit quietly nearby and let your dog get comfortable. Pet slowly and gently only if it helps them relax. Let your dog choose their position.



## 3 Know what relaxation looks like

### Alert dog

- Head up and watching
- Body stiff or ready to move
- Eyes wide and focused
- May shift position often



### Relaxed dog

- Head resting naturally
- Body loose and comfortable
- Eyes soft or closing
- Breathing slower and steady



**Look for several signs together. A still dog can be tense.**

## 4 Reward the calm

When you see signs of relaxation, quietly say “Good” and place a treat near your dog. Keep your movements slow and reward when you see their body soften.



## 5 Build more time

20 sec → 45 sec → 1 min → 2 min → 3 min

Start with a short stretch of calm. Increase time when your dog is consistently comfortable. If they get restless, go back to a shorter time.

## 6 Add everyday distractions

Try one small change at a time. Stand up, cross the room, or open a cabinet. If your dog notices and settles again, reward. If they stay alert, make the distraction smaller.

## 7 Practice in new places

Try a different room, then the backyard, porch, and quiet public spaces. Start with a short, easy session in each new place.

## 8 Track your progress

Look for quicker settling, longer stretches of calm, faster recovery after distractions, fewer treats needed, and more consistent relaxed body language.

## Troubleshooting

**Keeps getting up?** Make the space quieter and the session shorter.

**Gets excited by petting?** Stop petting and give your dog space.

**Stares at the treats?** Keep food out of sight between rewards.

**Seems tense or uncomfortable?** Stop and reassess. Never force relaxation.

**A dog that is lying down isn’t always relaxed. Teach the state, not just the position.**

Informed by principles of conditioned relaxation and Steven Lindsay’s Posture-Facilitated Relaxation (PFR). This is a voluntary relaxation exercise, not the original hands-on PFR procedure.

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