



Matwork

The goal of matwork is to create a portable "island" of calm so that we can help the dog experience more calm states, then help them access calm in more environments because the mat is portable. Once they find out that calm behavior (and relaxed feelings) is something we value, and something that "pays", most dogs will begin to exhibit these behaviors more even outside training sessions- feeling good is addictive!

To build relaxation with matwork, we need to show the dog three things:

1
How to stabilize the body

2
How to feel on the mat

3
Nothing else matters

Use a standard bath mat with grippy backing and a little cushion.

A harder surface like a yoga mat will cause treats to bounce off.

Make sure your dog can get their elbows on the mat comfortably, but don't worry about their whole body fitting.

A blanket or towel may slip, making some dogs feel unsafe.



Don't use your dog's bed- we want this mat to be just for relaxation work with us.

Matwork Part 1 Criteria (expectations)

- Go to the mat when it is presented
(the presence of the mat is the cue for this behavior, no need for a verbal prompt.)
- Put elbows on the mat
(don't worry about the rest of your dog's body)
- Don't leave until released
("All Done")

Deliver rewards directly on the mat, not from your hand.

Lower value rewards like kibble may be best for dogs that LOVE food.

Don't use your regular marker "yes"- either just feed or use a special calm reward marker.

Move to Matwork Part 2 when:

- When you put the mat down, your dog goes to the mat and puts elbows on it quickly (within 10 seconds)
- They can comfortably hang out on the mat for at least 1 minute with reinforcement every 10-15 seconds.