

Why teach off?

Teaching a dog to get off a raised surface is a useful skill that can be used in many different scenarios. If you would like the company of your dog on the couch, invite them up with an “Up Up or On” cue. If you prefer the couch to yourself, cue them “off” cue and direct them to a comfy alternative surface of their own. It doesn’t change the way you train the behavior, but it changes the rules for your dog. So choose your rules and be consistent. M/T = say your marker word then give a treat.

Step 1: Encourage the dog onto the raised surface

1. Stand near your raised surface such as your couch or bed and pat it while saying “up up” to encourage them to jump on to it.
2. Once they are up, do not reward them with treats or praise.
3. Hold your hand with the treat in front of your dog’s nose and lure him to the floor.
3. Once your dog is on the floor, M/T
4. Repeat the exercise at least five times. After five successful trials, move on to Step 2.

Step 2: Fading the lure, but use hand signals

1. Use the same hand motion (but empty hand) motion to floor starting at their nose.
2. When your dog gets on the floor, M/T.
3. Repeat the exercise about ten times. After at least 8 out of 10 in a row, move to Step 3.

Step 3: Adding in the verbal cue

1. Say “Off!” (cheerfully), pause for a moment, then use hand motion.
2. When your dog gets off, M/T.
4. Repeat the exercise about ten times. You will start to see your dog jump off with “off” and not wait for the hand signal. Yah! Now only bring out the hand signal if there are extra distractions and he needs a little help.

Training Tip: Dogs can quickly learn that jumping up and then getting off is a good way to get treats. So, if they jump up on their own, cue them “off” then have them perform a few other obedience cues such as sit and down before they get their reward. Then be proactive by giving them a reason to stay on the floor via random treat tosses for being on the floor, to interactive toys to a comfy cushy place of their own to relax OR all of the above until they are consistently relaxing on the floor.