

## VISITOR TRAINING

Many dogs get nervous and/or excited when they hear the sound of the doorbell or a knock at the door, and this can make welcoming guests into your home difficult! To make things easier and safer, you can teach your dog to run to their bed when they hear the knock or doorbell, and quietly wait there until your visitors are settled!

Whilst you are doing this training it would be a good idea to put up a sign on your door asking people not to knock or ring the doorbell, but to phone you from outside instead so that 'real' guests don't disrupt your training!

### Teach your dog not to react to the knock or doorbell

- ✿ Start by knocking on hard surfaces at home and ignoring your dog's response. (You can use a mobile phone to recreate the sound of a doorbell for the same purpose). If your dog shows a strong reaction – barking, rushing to the door for example) – then make the sound quieter. Gradually increase the volume until the dog is ignoring reasonably loud knocks.
- ✿ Ask a helper to go out and approach the front door to knock while you remain inside with your dog. Start by having the helper knock just once and ignore your dog completely however they respond. You can throw them a treat reward once they're quiet and calm. Gradually increase the number and volume of the knocks at the door until your dog is ignoring them completely, because they have now become meaningless – as they no longer result in anyone coming in at all.

### Teach your dog to respond differently

- ✿ Have your helper approach and knock the door again. When this happens encourage your dog to run to their bed – ideally placed in a room where visitors wouldn't enter - and reward them there by dropping a handful of treats onto their bed. Repeat this process several times during one session, but spend no longer than 10 minutes per session.
- ✿ Over a number of sessions your dog will start to respond to the knock by running to their bed with you. Encourage them to lead the way, turn it into a race to see who will get there first – it needs to be as fun as possible! When they get to their bed spend some time giving them a fuss and treats.
- ✿ The more you practice the better they will become – eventually they will run to bed all by themselves and wait for you to bring them a treat. When you get to this stage, start to give a longer lasting treat such as a stuffed kong toy with lots of food inside that will take them a good while to enjoy. You can now introduce short periods of closing the door to this room so that they are left alone to enjoy their treat.

- ✿ You can now try with a real visitor! Once your dog has run to their bed when the visitor has knocked at the door, close the door to this room so your dog can enjoy their long-lasting treat whilst you invite your visitor in and settle them down. Once your dog is calm, and if your visitors want to meet them, you can then let your dog in to meet your visitor if you feel it is safe to do so.
- ✿ You can now use this as your routine every time you have visitors - and take the note off your door!

## *Top Training Tip*

***Have a long-lasting tasty treat ready prepared in your fridge in case you are surprised by unplanned visitors! Preparation and practice make perfect!***

These resources have been created by Dogs Trust using the most up-to-date scientific-based understanding of dog behaviour and welfare needs and can be freely downloaded by anyone interested in learning more about understanding dog behaviour and training dogs.



Dogs Trust USA Inc is a registered 501(c)(3).  
EIN number: 82-2390086

[www.dogstrustusa.org](http://www.dogstrustusa.org)