



## **Queen of the Couch: Teaching Your Dog *Your* Furniture Etiquette**

Dogs enjoy a comfortable place, especially with views of their world, and what better spot than a cushiony couch? If you don't want your dog on any furniture or only on certain furniture, then you must teach her what's off limits.

If, however, your dog takes possession of the couch and shows aggression (growl, snarl, baring of lip, snap, bark, etc.) to keep control of the couch, then you need to work with an experienced trainer or behaviorist with expertise in working with aggression issues. You may try to teach "Place" (below), but it's wise to seek professional help for teaching "off."

### **"An Ounce of Prevention is Worth A Pound of Cure"**

If you have a puppy or have adopted a rescue that hasn't yet tried to climb on the couch, focus on prevention- which is much easier than trying to change habits you don't like.

Tips to discourage your dog from spending time on the couch:

- Play and cuddle with her on the floor, not the couch; do not hold her on the couch.
- If your dog tries to jump on the couch, gently block the space, say, "Out," and walk toward her and guide her out of the area
- Teach your dog the "off" command. If she is on the couch, use a delicious treat to lure her off. As she gets off the couch, say "off" and give her the treat when she reaches you. Do not say "off" if your dog is not getting off the couch or you will teach her to ignore you. You must have the dog in motion to get off to teach "off" and be sure to reward.

Some trainers advocate using a harness with an attached leash for dogs who resist getting off the couch. Only leave the leash attached when you are home and supervising and only use it to guide gently off the furniture. If you use that approach, be sure to use a harness and not a collar to avoid neck injury.

- Have a comfortable place on the floor for your dog. Show your dog it's a great place by leaving treats for her to find there; when she's resting there, calmly bring her treats.
- Prevent your dog from spending time on the couch when you're not home by either restricting access to the room(s) with furniture or by putting obstacles on the couch to block her access (e.g., laundry basket).

### **Training Your Dog to get Off the Couch**

Avoid telling your dog, "No," and instead, tell her what you want. Consider:

- "Place" to go to her bed or other specific location;
- "Off" to get off the couch.

Another option is "out" to leave the room or leave the area by a certain distance.

### **How to Teach "Place"**

Teaching "place" can help you manage many more situations than having your dog leave the couch for her bed; for instance, if you are working in the kitchen, sending your dog to her "place" has safety benefit.

1. Set up your dog's "place." Make her place comfortable and appealing-perhaps near your couch or where you sit, with a view of the room, and physically comfortable for a dog to rest. Like people, especially as dogs age, they may become less comfortable on hard surfaces for stretches of time.
2. When your dog isn't looking, place treats on her bed and give her time to discover them. If she doesn't find them in a few hours, lead her over to the treats.
3. As soon as your dog sets one paw onto the place, say "place," and praise her while she eats the treats.
4. Continue to place treats on her bed when she isn't looking until your dog goes to the place often to look for more treats.
5. Once your dog checks her place often for treats, instead of putting more treats on her bed, give her a treat whenever she steps onto her place without being told "place."
6. As your dog goes and lies down on her place, reward her when she's there by calmly putting treats down in front of her.
7. Over time, as your dog lies on her place often, only give treats when she stays for more than 5 minutes and gradually increase the amount of time between rewards of treats.

### **How to Teach "Off"**

1. "Off" means to get off something or to get down from someplace. If you want your dog to be on the couch with invitation only, "off" is key. What follows will help you teach "up" and "off" together.
2. Find a firm object on which your dog can step or climb onto-furniture on which she's permitted, an outdoor step or deck, a platform. Your dog must be able to stand on whatever you choose.
3. Attach a leash {with harness} to your dog and, with delicious treats, lead her up onto the couch {or another object}. As she gets up onto the couch, say, "Up!" and reward her. Initially, you may want to try squeaking a toy and/or placing treats on the couch.
4. After your dog has her treat, toss a treat on the floor and as she starts to jump off for the treat, say, "Off!" Praise her and reward her again.
5. Practice "up" and "off" so that your dog gets on and off the couch without hesitation.
6. After she's a pro at "up" and "off" with treats, try rewarding her with praise instead of a treat; then when you say off, if she jumps off without a treat tossed on the floor, reward her with 3 or more treats to convey how fantastic she is. If she doesn't get off, help her gently with the leash.
7. (Please don't use a collar even for gently pulling your dog.) If you needed to lead your dog off the couch, praise but do not give a treat since you did the work.
8. Practice "off" with the leash when your dog does not obey and reward with 3 treats when your dog does obey.
9. Once your dog reliably gets off when told, stop rewarding her with treats. If she goes to her place, reward her with a few treats. The goal here is to make sure the reward is for "place" and that she doesn't get on the couch simply to receive treats for jumping off the couch.

Continue to make her "Place" rewarding, fun, safe, and comfortable. Be consistent and only reward with treats when your dog has earned those treats. Take care only to speak a command when you are very certain that your dog will do what she's been told; otherwise you teach her that she doesn't have to do what she's been told.

Sources:

<https://www.petful.com/behaviors/how-train-dog-stay-off-couch/>

<https://dogdiscoveries.com/training-a-dog-to-get-off-the-bed/>