



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:



Matwork Part 3 Nothing Else Matters

Once your pup understands how to stabilize their body on the mat and we've built a strong history of relaxing in that context, we can start to show them that they are also capable of maintaining that feeling of **safety** and **relaxation** even when things are going on in the world around them.

We use a systematic set of stimuli called the **Protocol for Relaxation** to gradually expose them to things like movement, proximity, and sound that might be interesting or concerning to them in the real world.

[Read more about the relaxation protocol here](#)



[Find the written protocol here](#)



[Download the audio files here](#)

Modifications to the Original Protocol:

- When the protocol says "sit", replace in your mind with "lay on the mat"
- Reward on the mat after each element
- When the protocol says to count out loud, say the alphabet or count in another language instead.
- Especially for very "foodie" dogs, use lower value food like kibble
- When you run out of room, just walk randomly. Don't go out of sight until the protocol says to.

Move from one task set ("day") to the next when:

Your dog can complete the task set without getting up, vocalizing, or excessive fidgeting.

If you get stuck (you've repeated one task set 3+ times without significant improvement):

- Try to identify elements that are hardest for your dog and just work on those outside the protocol (let me know if you need help with this!)
- Go back to the previous task set for a few days then try moving forward again.