

TRAINING UP & OFF

“Off” means for your dog to put all four paws on the ground. Whether they have two paws on something (you, a guest, or the counter) or all four paws on something (on furniture or in the car), “off” means to jump off and put all four of those paws on the floor. When training your dog to recognize “off,” you may want to pair it with “up,” which (obviously) commands your dog to jump up onto whatever you’re signaling — onto the couch, into the car, etc. Here’s how to train your dog to recognize the two commands.

- Start by preparing the treats. Have a cup or so of dog sausage handy, either in a nearby container or a training pouch.
- Give the “up” command and pat the couch to encourage the dog to jump onto it.
- When your dog is on the couch, praise them and give them a treat (in that order).
- Now say “off” and toss a single treat on the floor with a sweeping, finger-point gesture so that the dog watches it and sees the treat land. The second they jump off, praise them, and then they get their reward on the floor.
- Practice having your dog jump up and jump off for a couple of sessions until the dog is reliably following your commands.
- Now over the next several days, stop rewarding your dog when they jump up, but keep praising them. Continue to praise and reward them when they jump off, but now, don’t drop the treat until the dog actually jumps off. Instead, make the off gesture as usual as if you were dropping the treat, but don’t drop it. Wait until the dog jumps off first.
- After several repetitions of the previous step, gradually begin to cut back on the treats. Sometimes the dog gets praise and a reward for jumping off, sometimes they get praise and a toy, and sometimes they get praise and petting. Don’t do away with treats entirely — let the dog have a nice surprise once every four or five times. That will keep your dog’s response strong as they guess that maybe this time they’ll get rewarded with a treat.