

THE CRAWL



I (**Heather**) put Harta's crawl on cue by capturing the behaviour. As a pup he acted just like an otter and slithered down grassy banks on his stomach with his back legs stretched out behind him. I just clicked and treated (c/t) this behaviour and added the cue 'crawl' to it. I have to be very careful though where I tell him to crawl. At one point he got a carpet burn on his privates - so now I allow him to crawl in whatever way is more comfortable for him and I make sure it's not on concrete or gravel. By giving a 'flat' cue, which means sphinx like on the floor, and the 'crawl' he figured out how he should move his legs if he was finding it awkward 'slithering' and I accepted that. I'm now thinking that I might go one step further and teach him different cues for the different crawls.

Once he was doing it forward, it turned out to be quite easy to teach him to crawl back. Since he'd already figured out how to move his legs to crawl forward, I just gave a 'flat' then 'crawl back' cue and c/t'd for incremental movements back, over time building on distance.

The key thing in teaching any behaviour is a solid foundation. Make sure they understand a 'down' and a 'back' before attempting to teach the crawl back.

For a dog that doesn't do it naturally there are many ways to set the dog up to learn it. Try telling him 'down' on one side of a coffee table (or small stool depending on size of the dog) with you on the other side. Get down to his level with a treat in hand and slowly move the hand towards you under the table so his nose reaches out towards the treat - c/t, do a few repetitions of this and then wait till he moves more than his head towards the treat, maybe a slight paw movement forward - c/t. Gradually build up till he's moving his whole body under the table. Don't rush it and don't put a cue to the behavior until you have it the way you want it. Of course this is a simplified explanation, but I hope it helps someone give it a try.



Corinne writes: So – I will give you my “take” on teaching crawl – what has NOT worked for me.

When I first learned crawl in an beginning obedience class (the “fun” time of class) – we put our dogs in a down, left hand rest on front shoulders, right hand holding cookie at nose (dog is facing to handlers right). Handler pulls cookie slowly away encouraging dog to get cookie, left hand preventing dog from getting up. I could get my dogs to crawl or I should scramble, but only with the cookie in front, and they would crawl in a short line or circle around me. Every time I tried to take the cookie away or lift my left hand, the dog would get up and move forward.

Back Crawl (Lyd)

So, I was trying to teach Ali how to bow when she was a pup. She kept scooting backwards away from me. I thought, “Hm. That looks interesting,” so started rewarding that behavior till she did it consistently, then named it “Scoot.” It was easy to then move beside her. To keep her from moving away from me, I scooted against a wall. She finds this move much easier than crawling forward. To teach back crawl pivot, I make a ¼ turn (or less) and have her reposition herself. The command “Close” is handy to help her reposition.

Small dog challenges (Lin)

At first, I hesitated to offer advice. Corabel is just learning to crawl so I hardly qualify as an 'expert'!! But, we have encountered some problems that are unique to little dogs so I thought our solutions might be useful to others.

I began by luring her along the floor with food. It worked, but she wouldn't go any distance; the room seemed too much for her. My solution was to start working her in a hallway. Somehow, she didn't seem so daunted by a space that was only a few feet wide, and she was willing to go further. It also seemed to emphasize a destination for her; the door at the end became her goal!

My second big challenge was to stand up! Anyone with a little dog knows that you spend half your training time bending over to correct them; it's not very attractive, and can be exhausting! Ray said

he had used a soft broom with his dog. I knew that would terrify Corabel so I invented my own 'push-stick'. I took a soft foam paintbrush, bulked it up with a piece of foam pipe insulation and attached it to a stick. (some friends later decided it needed to be upholstered!) Now, I can stand up and walk beside her. When she tries to get up, I say 'down' and touch her shoulders gently with my 'push-stick'.

Since we have moved past these two hurdles, we seem to be making great progress. We are now working on variations to a standard crawl. The latest one is to have her do a weaving crawl between my legs. Now if I can just avoid stepping on her...



Gina Pink: for small dogs, sit on the floor with your legs extended. Lift your knees just enough off the ground for the dog to crawl under. Then, lure him under your legs with a treat.

For all dogs: have the dog do a 'Down'. Lay out a line of small treats in front of him a few inches apart. As the dog goes to eat the treats, gently hold him in the down position while telling him to 'crawl'