



From: Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals, 1997. By Dr. Karen L. Overall  
**Protocol for Relaxation**

This program is the foundation for all other behavior modification programs. Its purpose is to teach the dog to sit and stay *while relaxing* in a variety of circumstances. The circumstances change from very reassuring ones with you pre-sent to potentially more stressful ones when you are absent. The purpose of the program is not to teach the dog to sit; sitting (or lying down, if the dog is more comfortable) is only a tool. The goals of the program are to teach the dog to relax, to defer to you, to enjoy earning a salary for an appropriate, desirable behavior, and to develop, as a foundation, a pattern of behaviors that allow the dog to cooperate with future behavior modification (generally desensitization and counter conditioning). This protocol acts as a foundation for teaching the dog context-specific appropriate behavior. The focus is to teach the dog to rely on you for all the cues as to the appropriateness of its behavior so that it can then learn not to react inappropriately.

### **The Protocol**

The protocol is a program that was designed so that your dog could learn from it without becoming stressed and without learning to ignore the tasks because they were too predictable. The protocol intersperses long activities with short ones. You may have to adjust some activities to your particular needs. The pattern is actually spelled out in the program. It is preferable to reward the dog *only* for performing each task perfectly. If this is not possible for your dog, you can use a "shaping" procedure in which you first reward the dog for a behavior that approaches that indicated in the task. The next time you do the task, the behavior *must* be closer to perfect to be rewarded. If the program is done correctly, your dog will perform the task perfectly within a short time.

The protocol is a foundation for desensitizing and counter conditioning your dog to situations in which it reacts inappropriately. Theoretically the tasks are grouped in 15- to 20-minute units. Your dog may have to go more slowly or may be able to go quickly. Ms is not a race, and *people* who push their dogs too *quickly create additional anxiety problems!* Watch your dog's cues. Once the animal can sit for 15 seconds perfectly, reward it only when it approaches perfect behavior or perfection on the other exercises. Use the shaping behaviors discussed previously if needed. If the dog really cannot perform an exercise or task, return to one that the dog knows flawlessly, reward the perfect performance, and stop. Every member of the family is to work 15 to 20 minutes per day with the dog, but it may be less anxiety provoking and more stimulating for the dog if this is done in three or four 5-minute segments.

Remember that the keys to success are consistency and appropriate rewards. This means that, although we want you to work 15 to 20 minutes once or twice per day, you should work only for as long as both you and the dog are enjoying and benefiting from the program. If this means that you use six 5-minute intervals to accomplish three or four of the tasks that is fine. Please do not end on a bad note. If the dog's behavior is deteriorating or its attention is dissipating, do one final, fun, easy exercise and stop. By pushing the dog past its limits, you induce anxiety, and the dog backslides.

If at any point you cannot get past one task, try breaking that task into two or three component parts. If this still does not help, call the veterinarian who recommended the program and who is



working with the dog's behavior problems. He or she will be able to help you determine the root of the problem. Please do not just continue accepting sub optimal responses. The goal is to improve your dog's behavior. Videotaping while you work with the dog can help. Not only can you show the veterinarian what you are doing, but also you can be a more objective critic of your approach if you are not also an active participant.

Finally, remember that the dog will give you lots of cues about how it feels. We are rewarding the physical changes associated with relaxation and happiness and so will also reward the underlying physiological states associated with this (parasympathetic part of the autonomic nervous system). This means that if the dog is relaxed, its body is not stiff, the jaws hang relaxed and are not tense, the ears are alert or cocked but not rigid, its head is held gently at an angle, and the eyes are calm and adoring, you will be rewarding the nervous system responses that help your dog learn. If you mistakenly reward fear, tension, aggression, or avoidance, you will not make as much progress. If it is easier for you and the dog to be relaxed if the dog is lying down, do that.

Good luck, and do not get discouraged. Many dogs go through a period of 3 to 7 days when their behavior gets worse before it improves. For the first time in their life the dogs have a rule structure they must follow, and they get frustrated while learning it. As they discover they are rewarded for being relaxed and happy, their behavior will improve. These programs are more difficult for the people, in many ways, than they are for the dogs. Stick with it!

## **PROTOCOL TASK SHEETS**

Remember after each task to verbally praise the dog and reward it with a treat for perfect performance before going on to the next task. Each set of exercises is designed for a day or a block of time. Warm-up and cool-down periods are provided.

At the first sign of any anxiety /lips retracted, pupils dilated, head lowered, ears pulled down and back, trembling, scanning/, return to an exercise with which the dog is more comfortable or break down the exercise that produced these behaviors into smaller steps.



### Day 1: Dog's Task

Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 1 step back and return  
Sit while you take 2 steps back and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 1 step to the right and return  
Sit while you take 1 step to the left and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 2 steps back and return  
Sit while you take 2 steps to the right and return  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit while you take 2 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you clap your hands softly once  
Sit while you take 3 steps back and return  
Sit while you count out loud to 10  
Sit while you clap your hands softly once  
Sit while you count out loud to 20  
Sit while you take 3 steps to the right and return  
Sit while you clap your hands softly twice  
Sit for 3 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you take 1 step back and return  
Sit for 3 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 3 seconds

### Day 2: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 1 step back and return  
Sit while you take 3 steps back and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 3 steps to the right and return  
Sit while you take 3 steps to the left and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 3 steps to the right and clap your hands  
Sit while you take 3 steps to the left and clap your hands  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you walk one fourth of the way around the dog to the right  
Sit while you take 4 steps back  
Sit while you walk one fourth of the way around the dog to the left  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you take 5 steps back from the dog, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you walk halfway around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you walk halfway around the dog to the left and return



Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you jog quietly in place for 3 seconds  
Sit while you jog quietly in place for 5 seconds  
Sit while you jog quietly in place for 10 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you jog one fourth of the way around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you jog one fourth of the way around the dog to the left and re turn  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds

### Day 3: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit while you take 2 steps backward and return  
Sit while you jog 5 steps backward from the dog and return  
Sit while you walk halfway around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you walk halfway around the dog to the left and return  
Sit while you take 10 steps backward and return  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit while you take 10 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you take 10 steps to the right and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you walk halfway around the dog to the right, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you walk halfway around the dog to the left, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you jog 10 steps to the right and return  
Sit while you job 10 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you jog in place for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit while you jog in place for 20 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you jog backward 5 steps and return  
Sit while you jog to the right 5 steps and return  
Sit while you jog to the left 5 steps and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 10 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 4: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you jog backward 5 steps and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you jog halfway around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you jog halfway around the dog to the left and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the left and return



Sit while you jog backward 5 steps, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you clap your hands for 20 seconds  
Sit while you move quickly backward 10 steps and return  
Sit while you move quickly 15 steps backward and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you jog halfway around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you jog halfway around the dog to the left and return  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the right and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the left and return  
Sit while you walk all the way around the dog  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you walk around the dog, quietly clapping your hands, and then return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you jog quickly around the dog  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds while you clap your hands

### Day 5: Dog's Task

Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the right and return  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you walk around the dog, clapping your hands  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you walk quickly backward, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you go to an entrance and just touch the doorknob or wall and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you walk quickly backward, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you go to an entrance and just touch the doorknob or wall and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you go to an entrance and just touch the doorknob or wall and return  
Sit for 10 seconds



Sit while the doorknob is touched or you move into entryway and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 10 seconds while you jog in place  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 6: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 20 seconds while you jog back and forth in front of the dog  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you walk quickly backward, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you go to an entrance and just touch the doorknob or wall and return  
Sit for 20 seconds while jogging  
Sit while you walk around the dog  
Sit while you walk around the dog, clapping your hands  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you walk quickly backward, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you go to an entrance and just touch the doorknob or wall and return  
Sit while you open the door or go into the entranceway for 5 seconds and return  
Sit while you open the door or go into the entranceway for 10 seconds and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you walk quickly backward, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you go to an entrance and just touch the doorknob or wall and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway and return  
Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you open the door or go through the entranceway for 10 seconds and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds and return  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 7: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 20 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit while you take 10 steps backward and return  
Sit while you walk around the dog  
Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway and then return  
Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you open the door or go through the entranceway for 10 seconds and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds and return  
Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway and return



Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you open the door or go through the entranceway for 10 seconds and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 15 seconds and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit while you jog in place for 10 seconds  
Sit while you jog three fourths of the way to the right and return  
Sit while you jog three fourths of the way to the left and return  
Sit while you go through the door or the entranceway, clapping your hands, and return  
Sit while you open the door or go through the entranceway for 10 seconds and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 15 seconds and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 8: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you jog and clap your hands  
Sit while you back up 15 steps and return  
Sit while you circle the dog and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 25 seconds and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds while you sit in a chair (placed 5 feet from the dog)  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you jog and clap your hands  
Sit while you back up 15 steps and return  
Sit while you circle the dog and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 30 seconds and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you circle the dog and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 25 seconds and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you sit in a chair near the dog  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, sit in a chair for 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 20 seconds while you jog and clap your hands  
Sit for 15 seconds while you run around the dog  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds while you turn around  
Sit for 5 seconds while you sit in a chair near the dog  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, sit in a chair for 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds



### Day 9: Dog's Task

Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds while you turn around  
Sit for 5 seconds while you jog  
Sit while you walk around the dog  
Sit while you jog around the dog  
Sit while you jog around the dog, clapping your hands  
Sit while you jog twice around the dog  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the left and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you circle the dog and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 25 seconds and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you sit in a chair near the dog  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, sit in a chair for 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you bend down and touch your toes  
Sit while you stretch your arms  
Sit while you stretch your arms and jump once  
Sit while you touch your toes 5 times  
Sit while you stretch your arms and jump 3 times  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 10: Dog's Task

Sit for 5 seconds while you clap  
Sit for 10 seconds while you touch your toes  
Sit for 15 seconds while you sit in a chair  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the right and return  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you walk approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 15 seconds and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the right and return  
Sit while you walk quickly 15 steps to the left and return  
Sit while you approximately 20 steps to an entrance and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 15 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return





Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 15 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 5 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock quickly but softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 11: Dog's Task

Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock quickly but softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, and immediately re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, wait 2 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, and immediately re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, wait 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, and immediately re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, wait 10 seconds, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you jog around the dog  
Sit while you walk around the dog  
Sit while you jog around the dog  
Sit while you jog around the dog, clapping your hands  
Sit while you jog twice around the dog  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the left and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you circle the dog and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds

### Day 12: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit for 20 seconds while you hum  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return



Sit while you disappear from view for 25 seconds and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you sit in a chair near the dog  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, sit in a chair for 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 15 seconds  
Sit for 20 seconds while you hum  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 25 seconds and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the right and return  
Sit while you move three fourths of the way around the dog to the left and return

Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds and return  
Sit while you circle the dog and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock quickly but softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, and immediately re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, wait 2 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," and return  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," wait 3 seconds, turn  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds and re turn

### Day 13: Dog's Task

Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you hum  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands and hum  
Sit while you disappear from view for 20 seconds and return  
Sit while you disappear from view for 25 seconds and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you sit in a chair near the dog  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, sit in a chair for 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock quickly but softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, and immediately re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, wait 2 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," wait 5 seconds, and re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock or ring the doorbell, say "hello," wait 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," wait 5 seconds, and return



Sit while you disappear from view, knock or ring the doorbell, say "hello," wait 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 20 seconds while you hum  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you jog around the dog  
Sit for 10 seconds while you clap your hands and hum  
Sit for 5 seconds while you jog in place  
Sit while you jog around the dog, humming

#### Day 14: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds while you clap your hands and hum  
Sit while you run around the dog  
Sit while you walk back and forth to the door  
Sit while you leave the room, quickly knock or ring the doorbell, and re turn  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds while you clap your hands and hum  
Sit while you run around the dog  
Sit while you walk back and forth to the door  
Sit while you leave the room, quickly knock or ring the doorbell, and re turn  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view for 10 seconds, knock softly on the wall, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, and immediately return  
Sit while you disappear from view, ring the doorbell, wait 2 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," wait 5 seconds, and re turn  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock or ring the doorbell, say "hello," wait 10 seconds, and return  
Sit for 30 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," wait 10 seconds, and return  
Sit while you disappear from view, knock or ring the doorbell, say "hello," wait 10 seconds, and return  
Sit for 20 seconds while you hum  
Sit for 20 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds

#### Day 15: Dog's Task

Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands and hum



Sit while you disappear from view, knock or ring the doorbell, say "hello," talk for 10 seconds, and return  
Sit for 20 seconds while you hum  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," invite the imaginary person in, wait 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 10 seconds  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," invite the imaginary person in, wait 10 seconds, and return  
Sit while you disappear from view, say "hello," talk (as if to someone) for 5 seconds, and return  
Sit for 5 seconds while you clap your hands and hum  
Sit while you run around the dog  
Sit while you walk back and forth to the door  
Sit while you leave the room, quickly knock or ring the doorbell, and re turn  
Sit for 5 seconds  
Sit while you leave the room, knock or ring the doorbell for 3 seconds, and re turn  
Sit while you leave the room and knock or ring the doorbell for 5 seconds  
Sit while you leave the room and talk for 3 seconds to people who are not there  
Sit while you leave the room and talk for 5 seconds to people who are not there  
Sit while you leave the room and talk for 10 seconds to people who are not there  
Sit while you run around the dog  
Sit for 10 seconds while you sit in a chair  
Sit for 30 seconds while you sit in a chair  
Sit for 15 seconds while you clap your hands and jog  
Sit for 5 seconds

#### **For Future Repetitions**

- Repeat all tasks in different locations
- Repeat all tasks with all family members
- Repeat all tasks with only every second or third task being rewarded with a treat (Remember praise!)

Repeat with only intermittent treat reinforcement. (Remember praise!)