

A happy little pause at the door

A free, reward-based mat routine from Blushmallow

Some homecomings come with muddy paws. This little practice gives your dog a familiar place to step and pause while you get ready for the next part of your routine.

The goal is a comfortable, voluntary pause. Your dog does not have to scrape or “wipe” their paws. This is not a promise of clean floors, automatic paw wiping, or a result by a particular day. You can practise with any suitable mat; you do not need to buy a Blushmallow product.

Before you begin

Choose a quiet indoor spot, away from the excitement of an open door. Put a clean, dry mat on a level surface and check that it stays put. It should have room for your dog to stand or step comfortably. A compact mat may be too small for a large dog to stand on with all four paws. Do not ask them to bunch up, balance awkwardly, or turn tightly to fit.

Have a few tiny pieces of an appropriate, familiar food ready. Follow any dietary restrictions, and account for training treats in your dog's usual food allowance. Keep the first practice short, roughly two minutes or less. Finish sooner if your dog loses interest. Reward timing and brief sessions matter more than doing lots of repetitions. Blue Cross training guidance:

<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/advice/dog/behaviour-and-training/dog-and-puppy-training>

1. Make the mat worth noticing

Let your dog approach at their own pace. Reward a curious look or a comfortable step toward the mat. If you already use a reward word such as “yes,” say it as the helpful action happens, then give the treat. Otherwise, simply reward promptly.

A sniff is a fine first attempt. Do not pull a lead, move their paws by hand, or keep enticing them forward when they are hesitant. Make the exercise easier or leave it for another time. Reward-based training builds on actions you want without using intimidation or physical force. AVSAB humane training statement: <https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AVSAB-Humane-Dog-Training-Position-Statement-2021.pdf>

2. Reward a step onto it

When approaching is easy, reward a paw landing on the mat. Over several comfortable attempts, reward a little more of the action: another step, then standing on it if the size allows.

Give rewards from your hand at an easy height. There is no need to hide food deep in the fibers or encourage digging, chewing, or scratching. Let your dog move away between attempts. You are teaching a welcoming location, not trapping them there.

3. Add a tiny pause

When your dog readily steps onto the mat, wait only a moment before rewarding. Give the reward while they are still in the spot. Say a release phrase, such as “all done,” and invite them to move on.

Increase the pause in small steps. If they leave before the reward, make the next attempt shorter. Standing is enough; you do not need to insist on a sit or a down. Gradual duration and rewarding before the dog leaves help set up successful practice. RSPCA stay guidance: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/training/stay>

4. Give the routine a cue

Once your dog is choosing the mat easily, say a short cue such as “mat” just before they step onto it. Reward the familiar action. Everyone in the household should use the same cue and a similar routine.

Do not repeat the word again and again if nothing happens. Return to the easier step your dog understands. Early practice works best with few distractions and small, manageable sessions. RSPCA training tips: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/training>

5. Try a few comfortable steps

If the mat is long enough, invite one or two ordinary forward steps along it and reward them. If it is too small, keep the exercise to the comfortable step-and-pause you already taught.

Do not demand stamping, rubbing, circling, or paw scraping. Extra movement is optional and does not guarantee that dirt or moisture will come off.

6. Bring it to your doorway

Start with the door closed and the hallway quiet. Practise the same easy action there. Later, try it during a calm return home. Keep your dog secure while doors are open, and do not rely on a new cue to prevent an escape.

A simple homecoming can look like this:

1. Come inside safely.
2. Invite a step onto the stable mat.
3. Reward a brief pause.
4. Check paws and clean or dry them as needed.
5. Say “all done” and continue your day.

The mat does not replace paw care. For example, winter grit and road salt can need deliberate removal after a walk; stepping on a mat is not enough. Follow appropriate veterinary advice for contamination, injury, or exposure concerns. RSPCA winter paw-care advice: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/seasonal/winter/pets/dogs>

If it is not clicking

- Walks around the mat: return to rewarding a comfortable approach. Check whether it moves or the texture seems unwelcome.
- Runs straight across: ask for less. Reward the first useful step rather than chasing or blocking your dog.
- Won't take a usual reward: pause and check the setting. They may need a quieter moment.
- Chews the mat: end the session and remove access safely. An entryway mat is not a chew toy.
- Seems worried, freezes, backs away, or growls: stop and give space. Do not scold. Persistent fear, pain, or difficulty with paw handling warrants help from a veterinarian and an appropriately qualified reward-based professional. AVSAB humane training statement: <https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AVSAB-Humane-Dog-Training-Position-Statement-2021.pdf>

Keep rewarding useful attempts as the routine becomes familiar. Different dogs learn at different speeds. One happy step is progress.

This is general educational guidance, not individual veterinary or behavior treatment. The practical sequence above is an original, modest application of the linked reward-based training principles. The cited organizations have not reviewed or endorsed Blushmallow, its products, or this guide.

Version: 20 October 2026. Before publication, check that linked guidance remains current and that any product-specific statements match the mat being sold.