



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department

Paw Pads – Suggestions and Guidelines

The Paw Pad also known in dog training as a Touch Pad, Mini Platform or Perch is a small raised area, big enough for the dog to place his two front feet on comfortably. Its purpose, as we use it, is to teach the puppy a nice, straight heel position and to hold that position, relative to the handler, as the puppy goes into stand, sit and down, the “Foundation Positions.” Paw Pad training is also a fun, positive way to teach the puppy self-control. Once the puppy has a high reinforcement history on the Paw Pad, the pad acts as an anchor and simplifies teaching a “stay” cue.

Most raisers will find that they can find something around the house, or garage, that will work as a Paw Pad. The material should be heavy enough so that the pup doesn’t knock it out of position easily. The Paw Pad does not have to be anything fancy but for clubs/raisers who wish to make durable, adjustable Paw Pads, directions are in the document “Paw Pads - Fancy, Stacking”.

Here are some ideas utilizing objects raisers may already have at hand:

- Pieces/blocks of wood
- Dog dishes/ rubber livestock feeders upside down. (Metal dishes are too slippery)
- Bricks (several can be placed together)
- Telephone books bound with non-skid material and duct tape (ideal in some ways as they come in large and smaller versions and can be stacked and taped together)
- Cut up horse stall mats placed on top of each other, bound with duct tape
- In a pinch just a book, appropriately sized, with piece of shelf liner wrapped around it

Examples:



Sizing etc.:

- The Paw Pad should be textured or covered with material such as grip-type shelf liner mats, rug pads or yoga mats (both sides to be covered if the pad is to be placed on smooth floors)
- It should be high enough for the first week or two of training sessions, that the pup finds it more comfortable to stand than to sit when its front paws are on the pad. (See Paw Pad Games #1 and #2)
- A suggested height is 4-6". When starting the sit and down positions, the pup may find it more comfortable to have a lower pad, around 1-2" high
- The length should be approximately 10-12" and the width 4-9". It should be big enough that the pup has room to comfortably put its two front feet on it; the pup will find it easier to balance if the pad not too small. Too wide a pad and the pup may try to get all four paws onto it

The Paw Pad should only be used for the first four to eight weeks of work on foundation (obedience) positions, after that the puppy should be ready to wean off the Paw Pad.