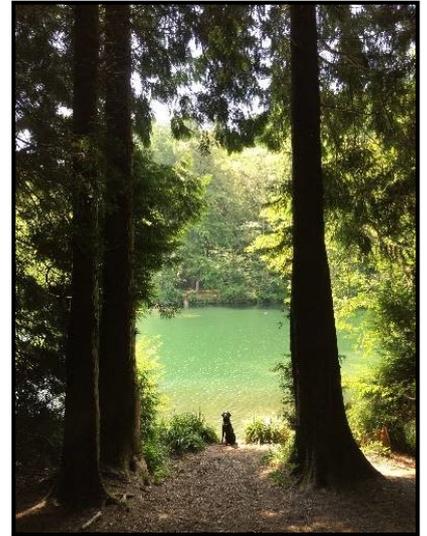


Teaching 'Stay'

The aim of teaching a dog to 'stay' is for our dog to remain in a specific position until we return to them. This can be a useful behaviour to teach your dog for any time you need them to stay in a certain place – for example to help keep them out of the way whilst you are doing the gardening or cooking. (Or even just for posing for beautiful photos of them!...).

This can be a challenging for dogs to learn – as it is asking your dog needs to remain at a distance from you, regardless of whatever distraction might be happening, for an extended period of time! That's tricky, especially when we spend so much time with our dogs and teach them to come to us and pay us attention when we ask!

But every dog can learn to stay in one place, especially if training is always fun and rewarding. We do this by using reward-based training and progressing only very gradually, so our dogs can be confident at every stage.



Start off slowly - stay by his side while he learns to stay still!

- Ask your dog to sit (or lie down if this is easier or more comfortable for them), then reward them with a treat immediately. Encourage them to stand back up, and then repeat. This stage rewards them for the position you will eventually want them to remain in when you start moving away from them.
- Ask your dog to sit, wait 1 second before rewarding them with a treat. Then encourage them to move about and have a brief break, before repeating. Build up the time between asking them to sit and rewarding them gradually until your dog can stay sitting still for 5 seconds. At this stage you will still be stood right next to them!
- Now you can add the word "stay". Ask your dog to sit, then say "stay" and wait 5 seconds before rewarding them with a treat and then encouraging them to move away and have a short break. Only say "stay" once – don't repeat yourself (you want your dog to be able to listen after just one ask!).
- Gradually continue to build up the time that your dog stays sitting still.



The owner stays next to their dog, asks them to "sit" then gives them a treat after they have stayed still for just 1 second, to begin with. They will slowly build up to their dog sitting still for 5 seconds before giving the treat.

- Once your dog can sit still for 10 seconds, start to make the amount of time you ask them to stay still for before rewarding them completely unpredictable! For example, ask for 3 seconds before rewarding them then letting them move, then 4 seconds before rewarding and then releasing them, then 2, then 5, then 6, then 8, then 4... and so on! This means they won't be able to predict how long you need them to stay still for, so they shouldn't start to get ready to move about until you have made it clear by returning to them and rewarding them.
- If your dog gets up before you have rewarded them this could mean that the length of time you're asking them to stay still for is too long at this point, or you have been training for too long and they're tired or getting bored. Go back to some shorter stays then finish the session or do something simple your dog knows well and can get right! Keep positive! Showing your dog that you are unhappy would only confuse them and make them worry.

Now you can start to move away from him!



- Ask your dog to sit and "stay". Just lean slightly to the side, away from them, to get them used to you moving your body away from them. Go back to your starting position and reward them. Encourage them to stand up and move around for a short break, and then repeat.

- Next ask your dog to sit and "stay" and this time move one step to the side, then return to your dog and reward them if they have remained sitting down.

The owner starts moving away very gradually to begin, just leaning away at first while the dog gets used to staying still at the same time.

- Always return to your dog before you reward them - we want them to feel that the position they are staying in is really rewarding, as it always results in you returning and giving them a treat, so they won't want to move at all! If you give the reward to your dog as they get up when you're going back to their side you're actually teaching them that getting up gets them the reward, so they'll start to get up as soon as you start to return to them! Be careful to reward exactly what you want – which is your dog in the position in which you left them.



Here the owner has gradually built up to being able to take a side-step away from their dog and waiting for a very short while before returning and rewarding their dog.

- Gradually build up how far and in what direction you move. As with building up the duration, we want to be unpredictable... so for example, you might practice moving 1 step to the side, then 2, then 1 step backwards or on the diagonal, then 4 steps ahead... this variety teaches your dog that whatever direction you move away from them, they will still only get their treat reward for staying exactly in the position they were in when you said “stay”.

Building in distractions...

- You should now understand the principles and process of teaching your dog to stay and they should be good at doing this within your home, so it's time to take it on the road!
- When you start training your dog will think “stay” only means ‘stay’ inside the house or the garden – wherever you’ve been practising! You will need to go right back to the beginning whenever you start to train them in new places. But don’t worry, your dog will get quicker each time and will soon start to grasp the concept wherever you may be.
- Build distractions in gradually by choosing carefully the locations you practice in and how busy they are – especially as it becomes much harder for your dog to stay still the more activity is happening around them. Start in the garden, then an empty park, then when people/dogs are far away, then closer, and so on... you can use even tastier and extra special treats in locations that are particularly challenging for them!
- We can also make distractions ourselves! Can your dog stay whilst you roll a ball slowly (then gradually get faster), skip away, chat to someone else or go out of sight? The possibilities are only limited by your imagination and really help cement the concept of ‘stay’ to your dog!



There's no need to rush! Building up the difficulty slowly and setting your dog up for success should mean your dog's behaviour is more reliable.

These resources have been created by Dogs Trust using the most up-to-date scientific-based understanding of dog behaviour and welfare needs and can be freely downloaded by anyone interested in learning more about understanding dog behaviour and training dogs.



Dogs Trust USA Inc is a registered 501(c)(3).
EIN number: 82-2390086

www.dogstrustusa.org