



3 EASY STEPS TO TEACH YOUR DOG TO STAY

It is far easier for dogs to learn our language if we clearly define what each word means. A clear definition of stay is to remain where placed until asked to do something else or until given a release word, such as “Okay.” Set a goal for you and your dog, such as staying for up to 3-4 minutes while you walk up to 20 feet away even with some minor distractions present (i.e. people visiting or food on a table).

By this definition there are three parts to the stay:

- 🐾 Duration
- 🐾 Distance
- 🐾 Distractions

Start by teaching each part separately and keep training sessions to a maximum of about 5 minutes. Also, regardless of which part you work on, if at any time your dog breaks a stay, simply ask for the position again and try for a stay that is not quite as hard so you give them an opportunity to be successful and then gradually build back up to more challenging practice sessions.

Duration

Teach your dog to stay while you are right next to him by asking him to sit or lie down and counting to one before you mark the behavior with the word ‘yes’ or a clicker and then give a tiny food reward. Ask your dog to sit or lie down again and this time delay offering the tiny treat for the count of two. It will take numerous training sessions to work towards a consistent 15 second stay with you right next to your dog. As you repeat you should not only gradually increase the delay in the marker and treat but also vary the time. For example, a series of ten repetitions might look like this: 2, 4, 7, 2, 10, 3, 12, 7, 5, 15.

The marker word (yes or good) let’s your dog know what they did at the moment they heard it is correct. The marker word also ends the behavior. However, you can also help your dog understand they are released from the stay by saying “okay!” and encouraging them to move.

Plan as many brief training sessions throughout the day and before you know it your dog will be ready to win a gold medal in the Three D's of Stay Training Challenge.

Distance

Once your dog is skilled at a 15 second (or more) stay with you by his side you can work on distance. To begin, it is best to decrease duration as you are working on increasing distance. Even if your dog can do a great 20 second stay with you by his side, don't ask for a 20 second stay as you start to walk away. Start by just moving your feet as your dog waits 1-2 seconds for the marker and reward. Then, try taking a tiny step away, come back and mark and reward. Then gradually increase the distance until your dog has a solid stay when you walk 5-10 feet away for just a few seconds. Then you can gradually rebuild the duration by asking for longer stays when you walk away.

Distractions

Once your dog is skilled at a 15 second (or more) stay with you 5-10 feet away you can work on adding mild distractions. What is mild will vary from dog to dog. If your dog adores tennis balls, don't have someone bouncing one across the room. Start off with something he isn't all that interested in and gradually build up to greater distractions. Again, as you add difficulty in one area (in this case in regards to distractions) decrease the difficulty in other areas (in the case in regards to duration and distance). Your job is to make things easy for your dog so his road to success is as smooth as possible. So, go back to your dog's side and work on stays of just a few seconds in length while working around new distractions and gradually increase the duration and your distance from your dog.