



Woofles
Gourmet Petfood Kitchen

Sit... Stay... Roll Over... Play Dead... Take out the rubbish....

[Part II]

Stay is a very useful behaviour in everyday situations, like when you're walking and need to tie your shoe. Stay helps develop your dog's self-control and helps a dog settle during exciting times. Stay can be useful at the vet. Stay can be a life saving behaviour. For example, a good stay can prevent a dog from racing into the street. .

The basic Stay

Ok... so the dog has learnt how to sit... and does it on cue when you ask... now you want the dog to stay in that position until you give the next command.

With the basic stay, the dog remains in position and place (i.e.: in the sitting position) until released.

When you first teach your dog to sit, you "mark" his performance of the desired behaviour with a Click! and give him a treat as soon as his bottom hits the ground. Gradually extend the time between the dog placing his bottom on the ground and when you click. Work up to 10 seconds. At this point, alternate longer and shorter times between treating. For example click and treat every 10 seconds, 3 seconds, 7 seconds, etc.

If your dog pops up, don't stress! Simply ask your dog to try again and make your criteria easier. This is critical! If your dog breaks the stay twice in a row, or if you are getting fewer than four out of five correct responses, make it easier and build up slower. When he can successfully hold the sit at least four out of five times in a training session, then you can make it a little harder by extending the time you ask him to stay. Over the course of several training sessions, gradually increase the time until your dog can comfortably hold the sit for 30 seconds.

Don't worry if your dog pops up after the click.. If you would like your dog to stay until you give a distinct release, place the treat right under the dog's nose so that he doesn't need to get up to eat the treat. This placement of the treat will reinforce the position.

The Three D's

When training the stay, it can be very helpful to work on the three D's: duration, distance and distractions - separately.

Duration: is simply how long your dog is doing the behaviour. You've already been working on teaching your dog to hold the sit/stay for 30 second durations. Think about how long you would ideally like your dog to hold a stay. For a sit position, perhaps one to three minutes; for a down position, 2 to 5 minutes. Ideally a well trained dog, should be asked to lay down, and stay, and remain in that position for as long as you leave him, regardless of how much distraction is around... but remember it's not fair to expect a dog to lay down for 5 hours and not move when there are other dogs running around playing right there next to him... you have to be reasonable.

Distance: refers to both how far away you are from your dog when he is staying. Along with training your dog to stay while you move away, as your dog becomes more confident, you can gradually increase the distance. At advanced levels, you can teach your dog to stay while you step out of sight.

Distraction: training is equally important. Once your dog has the basics of sit/stay, begin training in different locations. Each location has different distractions, so you will need to lower your criteria. Start small, by waving your arms or jumping up and down, for example and build up slowly.

Eventually, you may need to practice with the things that tend to distract your dog most, such as people walking near your dog, other dogs moving by, or a ball bounding across the ground. With enough practice, your dog will learn to stay even in the face of the toughest distractions.

This information can also be found on our website www.gourmetpetfood.co.nz