**HOW TO TEACH A DOG TO STAY**

Teaching your dog to stay is a useful command for your dog to know and there are lots of situations where you might want to use it. For example, you may want them to stay in the car wile you put your shopping in, or to stay wile you are talking to someone.

Even if your dog masters a stay, we would never recommend leaving them unattended in public, for example, asking them to stay outside whilst you’re in a shop, many dogs have been stolen when leaving them outside a shop. Not only this but the chances of the dog continuing to stay and will therefor break the command.

**TEACHING A DOG TO STAY**

**STEP ONE**

To start teaching the stay command, choose a time in the house when it is quiet, we should always use the three-step metred being house, garden and out on walks. This should mean they are less keen to go off exploring or get distracted.

You also want to make sure that your dog is calm when you start this training. If your dog is naturally energetic, you may want to try after they’ve been for a walk.

You can teach a dog to stay from any starting position, a sit, down, or stand but you do need to have taught them that first. Choose whichever position they find most comfortable. You will also need to pick a cue word, and make sure you stick to it. Something like ‘Stay’ works well.

**STEP TWO**

Ask your dog to get into your chosen starting position and praise them for it. Then, give your dog the verbal cue ‘Stay’, followed by a clear hand signal. Holding your hand up with a flat palm facing away from you works well. Take the hand signal away, and quickly reward your dog before they move. You are at the starting point of the stay, this might be just 2 or 3 seconds you need to make sure the dog continues to stay, if the dog moves you have not reinforced the previous step, return to the previous step and reinforce. Building it from 2 seconds to 5 or 10. By standing next to the dog you are more likely to be able to keep the dog in the stay.

You’re going to need to be fast with this, so you may want to practice this without your dog there first. Without your dog getting up before you have chance to reward them, move on to the next stage.

**STEP THREE**

Now, you’re going to repeat the same steps, but this time, as you remove your hand signal, break eye contact by looking away from your dog. Then, reward them as before. Eye contact is a big anchor for dogs’ attention, so this is a great way to really test how good they are at staying. Again, once your dog is comfortable doing this, move onto the next stage.

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**STEP FOUR**

Next, you want to start to build up the amount of time that your dog can stay before you reward them. This is going to be different for every dog. For some, you might only be able to increase by a second at a time, whereas with others you will be able to increase by as much as 30 seconds.

Keep a record of how long you are building up by, each time you practice. If your dog is moving, then you may have built up too quickly. If this is the case, go back, decrease the time, and work your way back up.

As a general rule of thumb, you want your dog to stay successfully 10 to 15 times in a row before increasing the time.

**STEP FIVE**

Next, you can start to put distance between you and your dog while they stay. You will want to make sure your dog can stay for a good minute or two before you progress to this.

Each time you ask for a stay, take a step away from your dog, and then return to them to reward them. Your dog may start to find it harder with the distance, so you may have to reduce the amount of time that you ask your dog to stay for and build back up. Start by taking just one small step to the side, and then one to the front and build up the steps.

Gradually increase the distance that you move away from your dog. If they are finding this too hard or are very sensitive to movement, you may need to begin by just shifting your body weight away from them instead.

**STEP SIX**

Once you can move around your dog freely while they remain in a stay, see if you can quickly pop out of sight and then come back to reward them. You could also begin to add in distractions, like toys, or dancing around them to test your dog’s impulse control.

As with all the other steps, build things up gradually, and if habits start to slip, go back, and build up again.

Once your dog is comfortable being asked to “stay” in a familiar environment, you can change location to the garden and start the training again. You can also teach your dog a release word, like ‘OK’ to let them know that they can leave the stay. However, you should always return to your dog to let them out of the stay. Don’t call your dog out of a stay because this could confuse them. You will be turning the stay exercise into a recall.

As with every exercise you wish to teach taking your time and making sure your dog has the previous part of the exercise fully reinforced, before moving on. Time a patience is your best friend. Most of all don’t get stressed.

**You can repeat all the exercises for the down and stand stay.**