

STAY



Walter and Lola in a sit-stay

Why do we teach our dogs to stay?

Stay is the ultimate impulse control behavior and like sit and down, it can help to keep your dog safe and promote well-behaved introductions to guests and people you meet outside.

Once your dog knows how to stay you can play hide-n-seek with them. It's a great enrichment exercise on bad weather days, is incredibly fun and promotes a stronger bond with your dog!

Here's how we teach stay:

1. Cue your dog to sit or down, and then **praise and reward them with a [treat](#)**. Now give the physical cue for "stay" – your open hand facing your dog, like you would use to tell someone to stop advancing toward you.
2. Now, take one step backward while **facing them**, and immediately step forward again. If your dog didn't break their position, praise and reward them. If they did, try half a step back.
3. Repeat the above steps until your dog successfully executes their stay on five consecutive attempts. We're using [Donaldson's framework here](#) so we know when to increase difficulty or distraction. Then, take two steps back and two steps forward. Keep going until you can get 10 steps away from them.
4. Now increase the level of difficulty by starting at one step again, **but turn your back to your dog** when you're walking away this time. Work your way to 5 successful repetitions at 10 steps again.
5. Now cue for a stay and take one step to the right. Progress one step for every 5 out of 5 repetitions they execute successfully until you can walk around them. Expect a sticking point when you walk behind them. After you make it all the way around 5 times in a row, begin the process again, stepping to the left this time.
6. The next level is to step out of sight. This is another sticking point for many dogs. Begin by stepping out of sight for 1 second. After 5 successful repetitions, stay behind the wall for 2 seconds. Keep

adding a second every time your dog executes 5 consecutive repetitions. After your dog has achieved 5 seconds, try pushing to 10, then 15, 20, 25, 30. After 30 seconds try advancing 10 seconds at a time until you get to 1 minute. At a minute you can begin advancing 15 or 20 seconds at a time. Feel free to push the limit, but stick with [Donaldson's framework](#).

7. Now that your dog can successfully hold its stay regardless of the direction you walk or if you leave its sight, begin practicing in other rooms in your house. Once you're achieving success here you can add the verbal cue, "stay" right before the hand signal.
8. Don't forget to practice outside too, again starting in the environment with the lowest level of distraction .

PRO TIP: Anytime your dog breaks its stay, **calmly** walk back to the spot you asked him to stay in, point to the spot where you asked your dog to stay and then give the physical cue only, even if you've advanced to using a verbal cue. You can use the hand target to get them back to that spot if needed.

NOTE: Don't forget, if your dog breaks its stay 3 or more times out of 5 repetitions make the skill easier by reducing distraction or difficulty.