



Courtesy of: Heather Hime
Owner of Lucky Paws LLC
Heather@luckypawsmn.com
612-388-9656

Dog Training & Behavior Services

Impulse Control

Dogs with good impulse control are generally more well behaved and develop fewer behavioral issues, because they are more likely to think before they do things. For that reason, we teach exercises that involve waiting for rewards and patience.

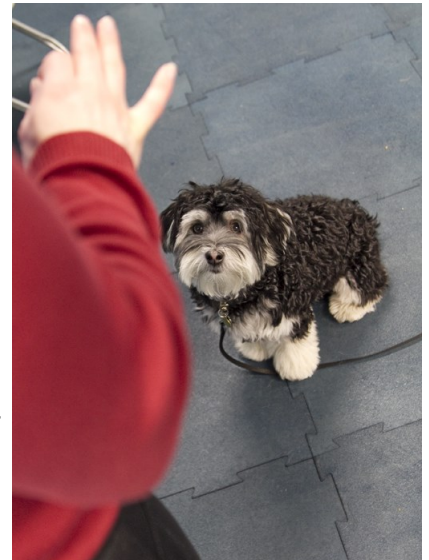
Sit: If your dog is new to “Sit,” you will need to teach them to follow a treat lure into the position. Put a treat to the dog's nose and slowly move it up over their head toward their rear. If they jump for it, lower the treat so it stays right at their nose. Once their rear hits the floor, say “Sit,” and give the treat. Repeat until the dog is reliably luring. At that point it is important to take away your treat lure, and instead simply pretend that you have a treat, and do the same luring motion. Once they sit, reward from the other hand. This is the first step in weaning your dog off of treats.



Sit Maintain: To get started with a sit stay, it is first important that your dog learns to maintain the sit behavior for a period of time. We call this the Sit Maintain. In order to do this we simply ask for a sit, and as long as the dog maintains it, continue to feed treats one after the other. We slowly build on this until we have a dog who is willing to maintain a sit for 10 seconds while waiting for his/her reward. The reward should always be given while the dog is in the sit position, not after they get up.

Release Word: Once your dog is reliably maintaining a sit for 10 seconds, we can begin asking for a stay. Before doing so however, you need to come up with a release word. This word or phrase serves the purpose of letting the dog know that they are finished with the exercise. Examples include “Release,” “All Done,” “Free,” or “Break.” It can really be any word or phrase, but should be something we don't use often in common language or while talking to your dog (for instance “OK” is something we say a lot, therefore is not the best release word).

Stay: Once you have chosen your release word, ask the dog to sit and tell them to stay with an open hand facing them. Pause a few seconds (less than your 10 reliable seconds), then say your release word, pause for a split second, then encourage the dog to come get a reward from you (the reason we pause for a second is to be sure the dog is really hearing your release word, not just watching your hand motion—eventually, we want the dog to release on the word only without any hand gesture). You may continue to give treats while the dog is maintaining the sit as well, but they shouldn't get up until you have said your release word. If they do get up before you release them, say “Ah, Ah!” and quickly step into their space asking them to sit again. The faster you get them back into the sit, the more sense this will all make to your dog.



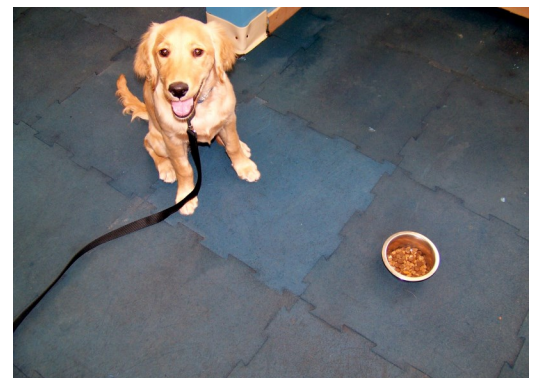
www.LuckyPawsMN.com



Testing Release Cue: Once your dog is doing well with their stays, it is important to test how well they know their release command. You can do this by offering no body language (hand motion/bending over etc) and simply saying your release word. If the dog knows the release cue well, they will release on the word only. If they do not release on the verbal cue only, we may have a dog that is releasing on a hand cue. It is important to try to fade the hand cue and even fake the dog out by doing the hand cue without the release cue to be sure the dog knows to release only on the release word. You may also try saying other words in the same way you would say your release to try to fake your dog out. NOTE: Once the release word is well known, we no longer have to give a reward on release, the freedom is the reward. It is more meaningful to reward the dog while staying, rather than after it is done. Before practicing down stays, the down command needs to be reliable without a treat lure (hand signal and/or verbal only).

Adding the 3 D's: The 3 D's are Duration, Distance & Distraction, and should be added in that order. Begin adding to the amount of time you expect your dog to stay in place. Once your dog can reliably stay for 15 seconds, you may begin adding distance. You may need to start off by shifting your feet in place, then taking a small step away, and returning to your dog to give a reward and repeat, adding a little more distance every few tries. Once your dog can reliably hold a stay with you at a distance, you may then begin adding distractions. This can mean you go somewhere distracting to practice, or you practice in your home while adding distractions such as ringing the doorbell, squeaking and throwing toys, running by, laying on the floor etc.

Wait for Food: Place your dogs food (or a few treats for practice) in a bowl. Ask your dog to sit, as soon as his/her rear hits the floor, you begin lowering the bowl. If their rear lifts off the floor, you bring the bowl back up while saying "oops" or "ah,ah!" and place your dog back into a sit. Repeat until you can get the bowl all the way to the floor. Once you can reliably get the bowl to the floor, you would continue the process while asking the dog to maintain the sit until you give a release cue. If they get up before hearing it, you pick the bowl back up and try again. This can easily become an automatic behavior by simply holding the bowl up until the dog sits (without asking for a sit - you certainly want the dog to have some practice under his/her belt before trying this), and immediately lowering the bowl. This will help the dog understand that you picking up the bowl means to sit and wait.



Wait at Doors: Similar to the food bowl exercise, we ask our dogs to sit and wait at the door. The door opens if they remain seated, the door closes if they get up and try to go through and you start over. Once you can get through the door while your dog remains seated, you can then give your dog their release command. Once your dog can reliably do a sit & wait at the door, you may then attempt to do a standing wait at the door to make things easier and faster. If you are consistent, this will eventually become an automatic behavior and your dog will simply sit each time you reach for a door knob. To help this become an automatic behavior, after some practice, try reaching for the door without asking for a sit and simply wait for the behavior. This will help the dog understand that reaching for the door knob means to sit and wait.