



TEACHING STAY 1: DURATION

How to train stay.

Choose a quiet place to practice with few distractions so it is easy for your dog to focus on you. To train a successful stay, build it one step at a time: First duration, then distance, and finally distraction. Once your dog is good at all three, you will put them together.

The duration exercise.

Step 1. Stand in front of your dog. Tell your dog, "Stay" in a cheerful tone of voice, pause for a second, then give the stay hand signal: Hand out in front of you, palm facing dog. Click and treat.

Step 2. Your dog needs to be able to sit and remain sitting while you continually feed him small, soft treats (like feeding quarters into a slot machine). Feed in this manner for 30-second intervals, then release your dog from the sit using your release word (such as "OK") and ignore him for 30 seconds. Repeat often. If your dog gets up during this process say *Oops!*, ask him to sit, and begin feeding again. You can also use the no reward marker, "Ah-ah" as you see him beginning to get up so he can correct himself.

Step 3. Once your dog is sitting still for continual feeding, slow the rate of reinforcement to a treat every 3 to 5 seconds. Continue to gradually slow your rate of reinforcement until you are only feeding at the end of the 30-second interval.

Step 4. Eventually, you will be able to wait for a considerable time before you reward.

(Note that we don't add distance now. This exercise is for learning duration, and we start at kindergarten level to make it easy and fun for your dog. When he is good at duration, please read the distance handout.)

Training Tip: Vary the length of the stay; for example, do some that are 20 seconds and some that are 5 seconds.

Troubleshooting: If your dog gets up, say, "Too bad" in the same tone of voice you would say, "Bummer." After a mistake, immediately ask for another stay, this one a bit easier, to give your dog a chance to be successful and earn a treat. Then work your way up to the stay that was too difficult. If he starts to get up, use a non-reward marker ("uh, uh") to indicate that he is about to make a mistake.

Troubleshooting: If your dog is making more than the occasional mistake, you are going too fast. Go back to something easier and work your way up from there. Remember, the secret to teaching stay is to start easy and go slowly.