

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 or "yes" and treat. Repeat a couple of times to get your dog into the game.

Step 2. Now tell your dog to stay, pause for a second, give the stay hand signal, and take a small step back with both feet. Pause here for one second (one-one-thousand). Return to your original position. Click or "yes" and treat. Repeat several times.

Step 3. Slowly increase the number of seconds you wait before you return to your original position. Remember to Click or "yes" and treat each successful try.

(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.)

Step 4. Eventually, you will be able to wait for a considerable time before you return to your original position. When you can stand 2 feet away for 15 to 30 seconds without your dog getting up, it is time to work on the second component of stay – distance.

Training Tip: Vary the length of the stay; for example, do some that are 20 seconds and some that are 5 seconds. Do more that are easy for your dog, and fewer that are hard.

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.

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.