

STAY 2: DISTANCE

The distance 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 this a couple of times to get your dog into the game.

Step 2. Tell your dog to stay, pause for a second, give the stay hand signal, and take one small step back with one foot. Immediately, bring your foot back to its original position. Click or "yes" and treat. Repeat several times.

Step 3. Tell your dog to stay, pause for a second, give the stay hand signal, and step back with both feet. Immediately return to your original position. Click or "yes" and treat. Repeat several times.

(Note that we don't ask the dog to hold her position for any duration of time. This exercise is for learning distance, and we start at kindergarten level to make it easy and fun for your dog.)

Step 4. Slowly increase the number of steps you take back, each time stepping right back in front of your dog. Remember to Click or "yes" and treat every time once you return to your original position.

Step 5. Eventually, you will be able to back up to a considerable distance. When you can walk out 10 or 15 feet and walk right back without your dog getting up, it is time to work on the third component of stay – distraction.

Training Tip: Vary your distance from the dog: At times go out 10 feet, at other times 3 feet. Do more that are easy for your dog, and fewer that are difficult.

Troubleshooting: If your dog gets up, say, "Too bad" in the same tone of voice you would say, "Bummer" and try again. If your dog breaks the stay when you move your feet, begin by only moving a shoulder.

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.