

# Dog: Stay Command



## Benefit

Stay is one of the most useful commands you can teach your dog. You can use it to keep your dog from overwhelming visitors to your house, prevent begging at the table, get your dog out from underfoot while you tend to household chores, or to make it easier to bring your dog to public places.

## What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken, cheese, or freeze-dried liver.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say “yes!” to mark the behavior.
- For outdoor exercises: a yard or long line/leash.
- Optional: MannersMinder™ is a useful tool, allowing you to reward your dog where he is so you don't have to throw treats.

## Prerequisites

Your dog needs to know how to sit or do a down on command.

## How to Train It

### STAY #1: DISTANCE

**Step 1.** First, stand in front of your dog, facing her. Ask her to sit (or do a down). Click and treat that first sit to get your dog interested.

**Step 2.** Tell your dog “stay” in a cheerful tone, pause, put out your right hand in the stay signal (hand out in front of you with palm facing dog), then click and treat immediately before your dog has a chance to move. Repeat this several times.

**Step 3.** Ask your dog to sit (or do a down), then click and treat. Tell your dog “stay” in a cheerful tone, pause, put your right hand out in the stay signal. Next, move one of your shoulders back a bit, then immediately click and treat before your dog has a chance to move.

**Step 4.** After moving your shoulder without your dog reacting a few times, repeat the procedure, but also take a small step back with one foot, immediately bringing it back in, and then clicking and treating right away.

**Step 5.** When your dog has done several successful stays with one small step back, try taking two steps back, then clicking and treating. Repeat several times, and then increase the number of steps you take back.

## Tip

The key to success with distance stays is to start easy and build slowly. The benefit of the clicker is that you can reward on distance. It is a “bridging” stimulus. The dog knows that the click is the reward.

### STAY #2: DURATION

**Step 1.** To add length of time to your dog's stay, scale back on the distance. If you have been getting farther and farther away before you bungee back in, come closer again. Face your dog. Warm up by doing a few short bungees—just a couple of steps back.

**Step 2.** Once your dog is into the game, take a couple of steps back, pause for one second, click,

## Dog: Stay Command *(continued)*

bungee back, then click and treat. Do this a few times and, if your dog is having success, pause for two seconds. And so on.

**Step 3.** If your dog gets up, don't say anything, go back to your dog, ask for a sit (or down), go back to an easier step, and then work your way back up.

### Tip

The key to success in duration stays is to vary the amount of time you make your dog wait. Don't always make it harder and harder—throw a few easy ones in here and there.

Only work on one thing at the time: either distance or duration.

### STAY #3: DISTRACTION

**Step 1.** Start this part of the exercise in a low-traffic area like your front yard, a quiet neighborhood sidewalk, a park during a low-use time, etc. Let your dog check the area out a bit so she's not as distracted by the newness of it.

**Step 2.** Ask for a few sits (or downs) and click and treat each one to get your dog warmed up. Holding onto her leash, start with easy bungee stays and, if no one is around and she's doing well, work on getting longer duration stays.

**Step 3.** Keep your eye on your surroundings so you can watch for people or other dogs. As soon as your dog sees something interesting while she's in a stay, click and treat immediately. Timing is everything. If you were going for a 15-second stay, scrap it and click the minute she sees something. The point is to click your dog before she has a chance to make a mistake.

**Step 4.** Later, when she's had some practice at this, wait a second or two before you click. If she gets up, say "too bad" and walk her away a few steps to set up again. The next time, be sure not to wait as long.

### STAY #4: COMBINING THE 3 D'S

Combine the 3 D's slowly and carefully. If your dog is having great success, begin slowly adding a short wait at the end of a distance stay, or try adding a couple of seconds between when your dog sees a distraction and when you click, etc.

### Follow these guidelines:

- When you make one thing harder, make something else easier. If you add a pause onto your distance stays, do so at a smaller distance than before you added the pause.
- When you practice in a new place, set your 3 D's accordingly based on the novelty of the place and how distracting it is. Compensate by making duration and distance easier.
- If your dog is failing, you are making it too hard. Go back to something easier and work slowly up to the harder stuff. Keep it at a level where your dog is getting it right and having fun.

### Tip

If your dog is having a hard time focusing, you can use a tether or practice in an X-pen so he doesn't wander off.