

Teacher's Pet Sessions

Training Session 3 – Step 1 To Teaching Stay

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Female Announcer: Okay, class, take your seats. I said take your seats! Class, sit. I swear, you're all acting like a bunch of animals.

Pet Life Radio presents "*Teacher's Pet*" where you'll learn how to understand and communicate with you pet and train them to be the best pet they can be. It's time to see the world from your pet's point of view.

So give a tail-wagging welcome to your "*Teacher's Pet*" host on PetLifeRadio.com. You may even learn a few tricks yourself.

Pia Silvani: Hi, welcome to "*Teacher's Pet*" on Pet Life Radio. This is Pia Silvani, Director of Training and Behavior at St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center in Madison, New Jersey, and your host.

This week we'll be working on teaching your dog to hold a reliable stay. There are three positions which you will teach your dog: a sit-stay, a down-stay and a stand-stay. This means if you say "sit and stay," a dog must remain seated until you release him.

Think of a behavior as having an on-off switch. You certainly have to turn the behavior on, but you, then again, have to turn it off. So, the off switch is just as important as the on switch. So whatever word or phrase you choose to use as your off switch, grants the dog permission to do something and gives you control, since your dog must learn to look to you for permission to do something else.

So, some of my recommendations that I use might be "okay," or short phrases, such as, "all done," "thank you," and, for children, I like to use, "bingo." Be careful not to use "good boy" or "good girl," or "good dog," since you're going to use those phrases to reinforcing duration exercises, which "stay" is.

Now, remember, "yes" means to the dog, "that's right, here's your reward." "Good boy" or "good girl" means to the dog, "you're right. Keep doing it, I like it, and, eventually, you will get your paycheck at the end of the job."

Once your dog offers you the correct behavior when asked, it is time to drop your "yes" marker. There's no need to continue to give a treat each and every time your dog performs a behavior once he understands what's expected of him.

You will now end the behavior by giving him the release marker. So, the release marker I use is "okay." Again, you can select whichever word or phrase you like. "Okay" means, again, to your dog, "you are released from the behavior but then look to me for another signal."

For example, if you tell your dog to sit when you open up the door, release him with an “okay.” Your dog should then go through the doorway, turn back to look at you and not bolt off and run away chasing after a deer or a squirrel. So, start to use your release word whenever you want to give your dog permission to do something.

If you pattern this, what you’re going to do is teach your dog to automatically look to you for permission at the end of any behavior. If you have multiple dogs like I do, I have two dogs, you may want to teach them a joint release, so that means all dogs may get up. And then, I also recommend teaching individual release words.

So, for example, if I want Gwennie to go through the door, but I want Lance to wait, what I will say is “Gwen Gwen,” that’s her release word; and Lance’s release word is “Bud But.” So, I like to make it a double sound. But, if I say, “Guys, okay,” that means you both can go, you’re both released. So, it’s very helpful; it gives you a lot of control.

So, before we begin our training session, if you don’t have your dog, treats and a tug toy, now is the time to get it. You’re also going to need a paper and pen to take some notes later on. So, we’ll take a short break and when we return, we’ll get ready to have some fun.

Female Announcer: Okay, class, grab your tuna flakes, biscuits and bones, “*Teacher’s Pet*” will be back in two shakes of a tail, right after recess.

Male Announcer: Let’s talk pets on PetLifeRadio.com.

Female Announcer: Okay, class, hang up your collars and leashes, “*Teacher’s Pet*” is back in session. Now, park yourselves on the floor. I said “park,” not “bark.” Oh, okay, “*Teacher’s Pet*,” pay attention, there may be a quiz later.

Pia Silvani: Welcome back. This is Pia Silvani, host of “*Teacher’s Pet*” on Pet Life Radio, thank you for joining us.

Before we begin working on sit, let’s do a little bit of warm-up with the things that you’ve taught your dog up until now. If you haven’t signed on to the show before, please refer back to training sessions number one and number two. For those of you who have listened to previous sessions, we’re going to start off by getting you ready to train.

Before I train my dogs, I want to get them a little psyched, I want to them pumped, I want to get them excited about learning. So, I always start off with a game of tug, I might also start off playing retrieve a little bit to get the dog’s mind set that we’re doing something together.

So, what I’d like you to do right now, hopefully, you have your tug toy. I want you to get your dog into a sit and he should have that impulse control right now. Wait two seconds and then snap the toy out there and tell him to “take it” or whatever your work is that you’re using, “get it,” “take it,” and now tug with him a little bit so he’s having some fun.

Okay, and remember, keeping it low, not high in the air, and now I want you ask for a give or whatever your release word is. He should immediately spit it out and, if he does, mark it with a “yes,” tell him to sit again, tease him with it a little bit, just to test to see if he really is holding that impulse control. If you think he’s holding that sit, snap it out there again and tell him to take it and start your tug game once more.

Again, keeping it low, you can go around in circles, try to get him all pumped up, that you're getting ready to work. Okay, once he's tugging, once again, tell him to give and, as a reminder, if he doesn't immediately drop it out, take hold of his collar, but don't continue to pull. That's the key.

So, right now, I'd like, if you were still using treats to get him to release the object, you need to stop using those, otherwise, he's going to become dependent on it. So, just wait for him to give and, if he does, tell him, "good boy," and then put the toy up on top of the table or wherever you're working. That does not mean though he should jump up to grab for it, obviously. You control the tug toy, not the dog. Okay.

Now, secondly, we're starting something new. I always practice to some attention work, without attention, you're not going to have success. The dog needs to, obviously, be paying attention to you in order for the dog to comply.

So, what I'd like you to do now is I want you to practice playing the name game. And, I want you to take the tug toy and, in a second, I'll explain the exercise first and then you'll do it. You're going to throw the tug toy off into an area and, hopefully, your dog will run to chase it. When he picks it up, then I want you to say your dog's name. If he looks into your eyes, tell him "yes," use your marker, and then grab a treat and give it to him. So, let's try that.

So, again, take your tug toy, you're tossing it off, hopefully, your dog went to pick it up or, at least, he became interested in it, say his name, if he turns to look at you, mark it with a "yes," and reward him with a treat.

Now, go pick up the tug toy, if the dog has not brought it to you. Now, if he grabs for that tug toy, before you can reach for it, tell him to sit, don't tell him anything other than to sit. Praise him slowly and calmly and reach down for the tug toy. If he dives for it again, this is not a game about who can get it first, this is about you picking it up. I would tell him to sit again, praise him calmly, pick it up and, if he does, I'd play a little tug with him for being patient, showing some impulse control. So you want to reward that.

But, remember, it's not about screaming and yelling at him, it's not going to help him relax, obviously, if you're getting too aroused. So, the key is, if you want calm behavior, you have to be calm yourself.

So, let's do a few more. I want you to practice a few more exercises, maybe toss a treat out now, six feet away, and as soon as your dog's nose is on the ground, I want you to say your dog's name. If he turns to look at you, I want you to mark it with a "yes," and then reward him with your choice, you can either tug with him or you can use another treat, whatever your preference is and whichever you think your dog will work best for. So, practice that a little bit to get him pumped up and that is so critical when you start training because this is about relationship. It's about you both doing it and you want the dog to think, "Oh, I remember this. This is the fun part where I get rewards. I do things and I get rewards." Okay.

Ask your dog either to give, if he's got the tug toy and I want you to have a seat, either on the floor, maybe do a little massage, while I just chat a little bit about stay.

It's extremely important that you effectively communicate what you want from your dog. Remember, dogs do not understand English. They're not born knowing what "sit," "down," "stay," "come" means. They also don't understand when you talk to them in sentences,

paragraphs or when you lecture to them. It's basically like the cartoon says, the dog is hearing "blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." They can learn quite a bit.

The last research that was done that I'm aware of, dogs can learn up to 400 words or phrases, so that's quite a bit. However, for each word or phrase you want him to respond to, you have to carefully teach the dog what it means by communicating to him in a way that he can understand.

We communicate with dogs by a process of what we call "demonstration and reward." So, what we do is, we help the dog learn what our English word means or whatever language you're using, it doesn't have to necessarily be English, but what that word means by helping him carry out the action as we say the word. As soon as he does it, we mark it and then we reinforce it for his cooperation.

So, with this in mind, you're going to teach your dog what "stay" means. Do not assume that he knows what it means, even if you've told him stay before and you've repeated it over and over again. The key is that you shouldn't have to repeat your cues over and over. People tend to think the dog is stubborn or he's ignoring them if he doesn't comply immediately. Perhaps, really isn't ignoring you but he could be confused.

I personally don't feel that dogs are stubborn, as I've mentioned before, I find that they're just not motivated or they're confused. So, if you repeat the cues over and over again, what you basically are doing is a really, really good job at teaching the dog to ignore you. Because, think about it yourself, if somebody kept repeating things over and over and over and over again, sort of like a child saying, "Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma," after a while, you're going to become irritated, you might even walk away.

So, if he's not responding, do not force him into the position by pulling on a collar or lead or pushing down on his rear if you've asked him to sit. This is certainly not a way that we like to teach dogs and it's not going to motivate him to want to do it again. So, instead, we're going to help him and we're going to reward him.

So, what does "stay" mean? "Stay," in short means, "freeze," freeze in that position. The only thing that releases your dog from stay is the release word and, again, mine is "okay." What I do is I pair it up with a double pat on the dog's chest or on the side of his body. I like to do that because, as the dogs get older, and possibly if they can't hear, or they don't see as well, I now have a hand signal to communicate to the dog that he's released.

So, for example, when Ashley, my golden retriever, when she was 15, she would wait at the door, because she could hear the door open, she was patterned to do that, but she couldn't hear when I wanted her to go out. So, I gave her a little double pat on the side of her body and she knew that meant to go through the doorway. So, do not release your dog from a stay when you're at a distance; that's a big mistake that a lot of people make. What they do is they might tell their dog to stay and then go into another room and then call the dog to come.

Now, what you're doing is you're putting the dog in sort of a get ready mode, "When is he going to call? When is she going to call," and he's not relaxed. With "stay," you want your dog to be relaxed. So, your dog must learn to have patience and remain calm and passive when in that stay position and always wait for you to return. Put your hand on the dog, he gets a double pat and then a release. So, the important concept is that the dog never decides when stay is over. He must stay until you tell him he can move.

Now, there are three stages that your dog will go through as part of this exercise, I call them the "3 Ds." It's duration, distraction and distance. And all of these will be taught separately and, once the dog is proficient with all three stages, we're going to put them all together and we're going to challenge the dog and, possibly, you.

So, today we're going to work on the first D, which is duration. Two weeks from now when we do our other training session, we'll work on the second two Ds, which will be distraction and then adding distance. So, the key to successful training is to set your dog up for success each and every time.

You're going to begin by only asking for what your dog is capable of doing. If your dog is not successful, it is not your fault. No, I'm wrong about that, it is your fault; it's not the dog's fault, it's your fault. You might be asking too much. You might be making the situation too difficult for your dog at that particular time. He might not understand what you're asking him to do.

So, keep in mind, whenever you're training your dog, your goal is to have each trial be successful for the dog. He's going to then be pumped to want to do it again and again and again. So, never move ahead to the next step until your dog is successful at, say, three to five attempts. Once he's successful three to five attempts, you're ready to move on to the next step.

I promise you, you're going to get much greater success by backing up a step and ending with a successful attempt than moving forward too quickly and, that's just part of us, we like to do that.

So, what I'm going to do now, is I'm going to explain to you first, before you get up and work, I'm going to explain to you what you're going to do and I'll talk you through it so it's nice and clear. So, in a second, you're going to get up and the only thing that you're going to need right now is your dog, because treats are up on your table or on your desk and your tug toy is up there as well. So empty hands is what you'll need.

You're going to begin by cuing your dog to sit. Once he's seated, then you're going to tell him to stay, immediately followed by a hand signal. Your hand signal is basically a flat palm that you're going to hold momentarily in front of your dog's face, it's not covering his eyes, it sort of, it looks almost like a stop signal. Okay? So, it's going to come out. So, again, it's sit, stay and, just immediately follow with a very brief stop signal in front of your dog's face.

Once he's in that position, you're going to now use your phrase, "good boy," "good girl," as you remove your hand. You're not going to hold your hand there to cover his eyes. You're going to wait two to three seconds as you praise him, no more than two to three seconds, that's pushing it. Once you've hit the two to three seconds, you're going to place your hand on his body, you'll give him a light, nice little pat, pat, as you say, "okay," in a nice happy voice. Immediately end the behavior with a reward, the dog gets a reward. Now, he gets his first paycheck after he's completed the task. All right?

So, let's try that to begin. So I want you to do, everyone to stand up and, don't worry, we're going to do this several times, so if you fall behind a little bit, you'll have plenty of time to catch up. I'm going to talk you through it several times.

So, tell your dog to sit, once he's seated, tell him stay, flat palm in front of the dog's face, calmly praise him, "good boy." Put your hand on his body and tell him, "okay," and immediately go give him a treat. All right.

Let's try that again. And you can rub him up in between and tell him what a good boy he was. All right, let's try that again. Tell your dog to sit, once he's seated, a very brief hand signal in front of his face as you say, "stay," calmly praise him two to three seconds, very calmly. Now, place your hand on his body, pat, pat, as you say, "okay," and, now, give him a treat. Alright.

Let's do it one more time. Try a different position, maybe try a different spot in the room. There you go. Tell him to sit, calmly tell him "stay" with your hand signal, praise your dog calmly, stay very calm, hand on body, ready, "okay," release and he gets his reward.

Now, take your tug toy up real fast, just give him a little bit of a mental break. Good. So, again, take it, tug, and this is typically what I do, I'm not going to maybe more – no more than three to start with. I want the dog to be successful.

Now, as you're tugging, I'll just tell you quickly, if your dog got up within the two to three seconds, what I'd like you do is quickly tell, "eh," just a little, "eh," and remind him to sit again. And "eh" means, I'm not mad, you're not bad, just that that was wrong. Just let's start the exercise again.

Okay, stop the tugging. What we're going to do now is we're going to build up to five seconds before we go to break. So, everything away, tug toy away, treats away, nothing in your hands. Tell the dog to sit, calmly tell him "stay," don't sing it, say it like a statement, "stay," calm praise, two, three, four, five, "okay." Release and give him a treat. Alright. You don't have to count, I'll count for you. You can be praising as you're doing it.

Alright, let's try it again. So, I'll do the counting for you and this is when you're going to tell him "good boy." And you don't have to keep repeating "good boy, good boy, good boy" you can say, "well done," "good job," "good boy," "nice." So, anything that's calm that the dog likes or the dog is paying attention.

So, here we go, let's do one more, tell him to "sit," "stay," and now, I'll count, one, two, three, four, five, "okay," release. Very nice, very nice. And, again, if he got up, you might be moving too quickly, maybe he can't hold the five seconds, or use your little, "eh," just to remind him as fast as you can to get him back into that sit.

Now, how about if we do a down-stay since we haven't done a down-stay yet? What you're going to do is go back to two to three seconds. Remember, it's a new position, anything new, you start from scratch, just like you did in the beginning.

What you're going to do is, if your dog does not go down on cue, what you can do is you can lure the dog down with a treat. So, you can start off with the dog in the seated position, you're going to put the food at his nose level, you're going to bring his nose to his toes, his front toes. And, then once it hits the ground, you'll just drag it along. Once he's in the down, you're going to place the food between the dog's front paws. You're not going to feed him hand to mouth and I'll tell you why later. So, it goes on the floor between the dog's front paws.

So, let's get him into a down; I'll talk you through it. If you're luring, practice your luring until you can get him into the down. Remember, if you're working on down, then you're going to mark it with a "yes," you're not going to worry about your stay. For those dogs that know down, tell your dog "down," no food in hand, same thing, tell him "stay."

If you need to stay down lower with them, that's okay, if you can stand up, that's even better. Remember, the key is your dog needs to be successful. Two to three seconds, okay, and he gets a reward.

So, let's do that again; let's try it again. Again, take your time, some dogs go down quickly; some dogs go down slowly. Tell your dog again, now, "down," "stay," very calmly, "good boy," and "okay," release.

Now, sits are usually a little bit easier a lot of times, especially if you've been working on sit. Downs can be a little more difficult, especially if they haven't learned the down. So, again, one more time, if they don't know the down, it's food held, flat palm facing the floor, put the food nose, drag it down to your dog's toes, the front toes, once it's there, you can drag it along the floor, away from the dog. You can give him a little massage on the shoulders, if his rear end keeps coming up. Once he's down, mark it with a "yes," and then place the treat on the floor. Okay?

So, that might be some homework for you to work on, getting your down. But, again, if you have the down, we're going to do the same thing, we're going to try five seconds now. So, let's stand up, tell the dog down, once his elbows are on the floor, tell him "stay," praise. One, two, three, four, five, pat, pat, "okay," and release him. He gets his reward.

If, at any time, the dog starts to jump up, or he gets up, what you might need to do then is, you might need to stay down with the dog, kneeling down next to the dog, maybe sit in a chair, that might help, and you can lure the dog into the down. Your goal, though, is that you can tell the dog, "down," but you're standing up. You shouldn't have to always have to be squatting down when the dog is in the down.

So, let's go back to a sit-stay this time. This time, what I'd like to do is build and see if we can get ten seconds. You might be able to, if you can't, always release the dog just before you think he's going to get up. That's the key. So, if I'm at five seconds, say, I'm counting to five and, you think, "I don't think my dog is going to make it to ten seconds," and you know what? You release your dog on six, before he gets up. So, this way, the dog realizes, "Oh, I got released from my owner. I just didn't get up on my own." So, if you continually have to fix the problem all the time, again, you're asking for too much.

But, let's see if we can get ten seconds. We might. Okay, here we go. We're going to go back to a sit. Tell the dog to sit, hand signal stay, now you praise calmly as I count. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, "okay," release and reward him immediately. Alrighty.

Okay, take out your tug toy and play a little tug with him. So, again, giving him a mental break on this. Alright, don't forget in between, what you can do is you can get a sit and, if he sits, tell him "yes," and then tug it with him again. If your dog is really good with down, tell him to "give," and then, "down." If he goes down, tell him, "yes," and tug with him again. So, you're incorporating play into your training.

Okay. You can have a seat. And I'm going to tell you what your goal is here and you'll need your paper and pen. You've got two weeks so this should not be difficult. You want to build up to 15 seconds. The key is you're staying close to your dog. You're not going to do this around heavy-duty distractions and you're not going to add any distance. Remember, that's testing, that's not training. So, you're staying close. I'd much rather have you do this in a variety of

areas that are not too distracting, then to see how far you can get or just see, “I wonder how long my dog can hold this?” Hey, again, that’s testing, that’s not training.

So, the question people ask is, “Well, why teach “stay”? What’s the purpose of “stay”? Stay is really necessary in training since it teaches your dog to control his active behavior by being calm and passive. It also gives you control when you don’t want your dog to be active. So, for example, you might tell your dog to down-stay, when you’re in your veterinarian’s waiting room. When you’re watching television and you don’t want to be bothered with the dog, you put him in a down-stay. Maybe when you’re outside and you’re reading a book, if you’ve got a pool and you’re in your lounge chair and you want to relax, you can put your dog in a down next to you. Working at the computer, you don’t want to be bothered at that point.

Other times might be when you’re at the park and maybe you need to get things out of your car and you allow your dog to get out, I put my dogs in a down-stay. I can take whatever I need out and I say, “okay, let’s go guys.”

Now, sit-stays are typically used for short duration exercises. So, for example, if I’m outside and I might be walking, I get the mail. I might put my dogs, if I don’t want them pulling on leash, I’m near the street, I tell them to sit and stay. I get the mail out of the mailbox and then, “okay, let’s take a walk down the driveway.” Or maybe, it’s a quick chat with your neighbor. You don’t want your dog jumping up on the neighbor. Rather than jumping, you tell the dog to sit and stay.

So, dogs learn by consistent repetition, each day builds on the day before and reinforces the lesson in the dog’s mind. So, you don’t have to do a formal training session. I always tell my clients not to do that. If you only go out and you conduct a formal training session, the dog will learn that he just listens during that formal training session but not throughout the course of the day.

So, instead, make sure that you practice this throughout the day, when you’re doing your daily routines. So, examples are, sit for a greeting, sit before I put your food bowl down, sit before I open the door, sit in the car. Maybe, at dinnertime, you want your dog to go to a mat and sit. Walking nicely on leash, maybe you stop in between, you throw in a couple of sit-stays in there.

So, great time to do it is when you’re playing with your dog or when you’re on your walks. Just throw in a lot of these behaviors. So, try to incorporate into fun games too. So, when you’re playing with your dog, train your dog at the same time. Your dog should be devoting his attention to you and vice versa. It’s a team effort. If you’re not paying attention and you’re yelling at the children in the middle of a training session, it probably isn’t very good.

So, your dog should love to do the things with you and you should get a sense of success and feel proud of what you and your dog have accomplished. So, in order to achieve that, you must make sure that you’re giving your dog plenty of rewards for good behavior. So, remember, rewards are anything that your dog perceives as fun and rewarding.

And, finally, it’s unrealistic to expect your dog to respond to your cues in environments outside of your home unless you practice in all environments. Dogs do not easily generalize. I hear all the time people saying, “But he does it at home,” or, “He knows better.” It’s just because he hasn’t generalized it yet.

So, learning is not all or nothing. They will make mistakes and, if you’re a good trainer, you will forgive those mistakes and learn that you need to just now need to work him in various areas.

So, unfortunately, we're out of time. If you want more information on the topics that we discussed in any of the training sessions, I have written six training manuals which are available for sale at St. Hubert's Dog Training School and you would probably look, if you have puppy, I'd recommend that you get the puppy manual, if you have an adult dog, the basic manual. You can email our office manager, Tracy Hofer, at Thofer, that's T-H-O-F-ER@sthuberts.org, O-R-G.

Training session number four, we'll be working on getting your dog to hold a stay around distractions and begin now to add distance.

So, as always, thanks to our producers for making this show happen. Please go to PetLifeRadio.com and click on "*Teacher's Pet*." Also, if you have any questions, comments or ideas, anything you'd like to work on, please email at Pia@petliferadio.com.

So, until next time, this is Pia signing off. Thanks so much for your interest in Pet Life Radio.

Female Announcer: School's in session with Pet Life Radio with "*Teachers Pet*." Learn how to communicate with your pet, train your pet and see the world from your pet's point of view. You may even learn a few tricks yourself. "*Teacher's Pet*," only on PetLifeRadio.com.

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