

# Teacher's Pet Sessions

## Training Session 4 – Stay – Adding Distractions & Distance

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 will expand upon the 'stay' exercise that we did in training session number three. So if you haven't listened to that lesson yet, my suggestion is you go back, listen to that first, practice that for about a week or so, and then click on training session number four and move ahead. You're not quite ready for this lesson at this particular time. But for those of you who have been practicing for two weeks, hopefully you've gotten some success, you've been out and about, you've been training your dog in different environments so they're beginning to generalize, and now he should be up to a 15 second 'sit' and a 15 second 'down/stay' in a variety of areas. What I also like to do when we talk about 'stay' is try not to use the same surface all the time. I think that's critical. If I put my dogs into a 'down/stay', for example, my dog shouldn't say, "Ugh, the grass is wet. I can't do a 'down/stay' on wet grass." That can be really, really helpful. An example of that, I went to an agility class with Gwinny yesterday, and here in New Jersey we had a huge heat wave. The heat indices are close to a hundred, and I did one run through with her and you could see she was quite overheated.

So anytime if your dog becomes overheated what you want to do is not pour water over their head like we do with our bodies. You want to make sure that their pads are wet and that you pour water under their belly area. So what I did was I filled up a little baby pool off to the side and I put her in a 'down/stay'. So she was very comfortable in that baby pool lying in the water, and that cooled her off immediately, so her pads were wet, her belly was wet and you could see her cooling down. So it's real important that you practice these on different surfaces too. And again obviously, you're not going to put them on hot pavement, use some common sense, but it shouldn't be the dog says, "Well I only do this on carpet and I only do this on grass, and I don't do it on any other surface because it's not comfortable for me." So what we're going to do today is we're going to begin working on the last two D's, which are distractions and distance, and the purpose of adding distractions is to teach your dog that it is worth responding to your queues despite the fact that the environment around him might be more interesting. Your dog should obey you anywhere, anytime and under any circumstance. So basically I call that reliability. You want to be able to rely on your dog to obey no matter what, under any circumstance. So in order to get a high level of reliability, you obviously have to practice with your dog in new and different environments, as I said two weeks ago, where distractions occur.

Distractions can be anything. To a puppy it can be a leaf blowing by. So what might be a distraction to one dog may not necessarily be a distraction to another. But once or twice a week rather than train at home, which is also good, you want your dog to listen there, take your dog some place new and practice there instead. So begin with relatively quiet areas, and then gradually progress to more difficult distraction filled areas. And again the key is always make sure that you're moving slowly, and you increase the levels of distraction, of the levels of difficulty of distraction very slowly. You would not obviously want to start to bring your dog to a parade and then expect him to hold a 'stay' as

everything is going by him; that is just going to be too difficult for the dog at this level of his training. So instead you might want to start on a quiet suburban street, and then progress to a lightly trafficked street, to a heavily trafficked street and maybe the center of a small town in front of the store, a local playground, the park where people are playing various games, maybe the parking lot of a busy supermarket. The more places you take your dog, the more reliable he will be with this exercise, so long as you don't, again, move too quickly. That's the key. So every new environment is a new training session. So before we begin our training session, again, if you don't have your dog treats and tug toy, which you probably should buy now, now's the time to get ready. So, again, you'll also need some paper and pen to take some notes, and we'll take a short break, and when we return we'll get ready to have some fun.

Pia Silvani: Welcome back. This is Pia Silvani, host of Teacher's Pet on Pet Life Radio. Thanks for joining us again. Before we continue, lets see how far you got with your previous lesson. So anytime that I'm teaching my dog something new, what I'll always do is tune him up a little bit to make sure that he's doing well. But, again, if you recall we talked about it last time, lets get your dog motivated by playing a little tug with them. And you can throw in maybe a name and do some tug, and name and some tug. And if I know that I'm going to do, as you're playing with your dog I'll just talk a little bit... if I know that I'm going to train my dog some, and I use play a lot as a reward, I might not play with my dog that morning. So I take my dogs out or my husband takes my dogs out every morning and we do a retrieve session. So if I know I'm going to an agility trial or I know I'm going to teach the dog something new or I'm going to a rally trial, I deprive them basically of playing then so they really want to play once we get to that environment, so I can really use play as that motivator, okay, to get him to want to do things. So keep that in mind if you know that you're going to go hiking with the dog or you're going to take your toy for a walk. Same thing with food; you're not going to feed the dog breakfast and then take him for a walk and practice walking nicely on leash using food as the reward. He just got done eating. He's not going to be very motivated about the food, even if it's very palatable. So if I know I'm going to use food in training, then I don't feed him his breakfast and I feed him his meal as I'm training.

Pia Silvani: All right, so if you have not already stopped with your tug, you can do that right now and lets do a little warm up. We'll practice a couple of these before we go on to distractions. So lets see if we can get up to 15 seconds, and again, just as a reminder if you have not been able to get up to the 15 seconds, either with your 'sit' or your 'down', and I'm going to give you a choice this time, you practice a 'sit' or you practice a 'down'. What you don't want to do is say, "Well my dog's not great at 'down', so I'm not going to do that one." That's very common, that's a little bit of a cop out I think, too. What I want you to do is work on the one that you might be having trouble with. If not, make sure that you're still practicing that one. Don't work on the easy one, but in today's session you might want to do that just to keep up. So lets pick, I'm going to call it 'trainers choice'; you pick the 'sit' or you pick the 'down'. So I'm going to just tell you put the dog in the position and I'll do the counting as you praise. Tell him to 'stay', and here we go. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, okay, release. Pat, pat and reward. All right. Hopefully you made it to 15. If you were close, that's great. That's wonderful. What you're going to do, we're going to do one more time as a practice... What you're going to do this time is, now I don't want you to continually praise, so I don't want to say, "Good, nice job. Well done. Keep doing it. Good boy." Okay, now I'm starting to sound like a broken record. So instead I might say, for example, I'm going to do this with Gwinny right here. So Gwinny's next to me and I'm

going to do a 'down'. Gwinny, down. Stay. Very nice. Good job. Very good. Good girl. And ready, okay. And I released her. So you can see I took my time, there were some breaths in between. Oh, I got a big stretch out of her now too. Oh, that was wonderful. Alrighty. So lets do it one more time, and not so much talking but you heard the tone of my voice, it was calm, she had her head tilted, she was listening, she was watching, and that's what you're looking for. So again, trainers choice, you put the dog in the position, totally up to you, and here we go. Stay, and I'll count; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and pat, pat, release. Okay, and reward the dog. Good, alright. Mush him up a little bit. Job well done. Okay.

Pia Silvani: Hang on for one second, and let me tell, lets move on to distractions now. There are two types of distractions; there are real life distractions, which are everywhere. And then there's set-ups. So what I explained to you earlier were the real life distractions, and that's anything outside in the environment that could be getting your dog's attention, so you can work those when you're practicing over the next two weeks. Here what we're going to do is we're going to do set ups. So set ups mean we're not trying to get the dog to break, but what we're doing is we're setting up a distraction for the dog, so that can be anything. So what you're going to do, and I'll explain it first, then I'm going to tell you what to do. You're going to put your dog in the position, you're going to tell him to stay. And when we start something new and different, once again, we're not going to now look for 15 seconds, 'cause now we've done something different, we're adding distraction. So lets go back and maybe lets just do 5 seconds this time, and then eventually over the next two weeks you'll build on this where you can get a 15 second stay with distractions. But right now what you're going to do in a second, you'll put your dog into the position, you'll tell your dog to stay, and I want you to clap your hands three times. Clapping your hands is not a release for your dog, okay, so if your dog gets up, quickly tell him, "Ah", put him back in the position, remind him to stay, clap three times. If he keeps getting up, clap softer. You might be clapping too loud. So three small claps and then, okay, release and reward. Alright, here we go. Lets start now. Put the dog in position, tell the dog to stay, clap three times, and pat, pat, okay, release, and reward him. And again, trainers choice, you want to reward with play, go for it. If you want to reward with food, go for it. It's totally up to you. But they get the reward on the completion of the exercise. Alright, lets do clapping one more time, then we'll do something else. Put the dog in position, tell him to stay, clap three times, one, two, three, and release your dog. Okay, happy release. And reward. All right. If the dog did well with that, here's how we work it. Now we make it a little more difficult. Okay, so this time what I want you to do is you're going to jump up and down three times. You jumping up and down does not mean that the dog now decides that he's going to get excited too. He's got to learn that he's in a 'stay', you're not in the 'stay', he's in the 'stay'. So what we're going to do is, same thing, put the dog in position, and this time instead of clapping you'll jump up and down three times, when you're done you'll release. Here you go; dog in position, stay, hop three times, one, two, three, okay, release. And don't forget to reward at the end. All right. Now this time what we're going to do, we're going to do the same kind of hopping again, but now you're going to delay. What you're going to do is you're going to hop three times, wait two seconds, then release. So now we're building on our duration a little bit here, okay. Put the dog in position, tell him to stay, jump three times, wait two seconds, pat, pat, okay, release. And reward. Good. So this is how you start to make time, you start to get your duration in there. Okay, lets try one more type of distraction here, a set up. What I want you to do now is put your dogs in 'sit/stay' this time, and what you're going to do is I want you to tap the floor a few times with your finger. A lot of dogs, they think, "Oh, what are you doing? What's on the floor there?",

and they might get up. If they get up, a little quick, "Ah, ah", put them right back into the position, remind them to stay, you'll tap the floor three times, wait two seconds. If the dog holds it, okay, release and reward. So let's do that. Put him in position, tap three times, stand up, shouldn't matter whether you sit, you're down or you're up, the dog shouldn't release himself until you release him. Pat, pat, okay and reward. Good. Give him a quick little tug break real fast, a real fast one. We're going to do one more. And stop. All right. If you've been doing lots of 'sits' what I want you to do is maybe try a 'down'. If you've been doing 'downs' now try a 'sit'. Now obviously I can't see you, so I don't know what you're doing, but it's just a suggestion. Okay. What you're going to do this time, this could be a hard one, you're going to put the dog in the 'stay' position, this time you're going to knock. You can knock on your desk, you can knock on the door. Remember, no distance yet, though. The dog should not say, "Oh my god, somebody's at the door." No, the dog's in a 'stay', so he's got to hold that 'stay'. So again, you're going to knock three times, praise the dog, good boy and then okay, release. So put him in the position, tell him to stay, you can knock on the desk or the door, knock, knock, knock, praise him and then okay, release.

Pia Silvani: The key behind this when you're working distractions is you can do set ups, but dogs are pretty smart, they pick up on set ups rather quickly, so you have to change them all the time. Now you could use, I'll give you some other examples of set ups that you can use. You can use, you can bounce a tennis ball if your dog really like tennis balls. Now that might be a difficult one for some dogs. So if the dog is really ball crazy, I might not do that one right away. But maybe a dog that sort of likes balls, I could bounce the ball. Now say you got to the point where you think, "Well I really want my dog to hold a 'stay' with the tennis ball", what you can do is, instead of bouncing the ball, that might be too hard, you can hold the ball in your hand and you might toss it up a little bit in the air. If your dog holds the 'stay', tell him, "Okay", and throw the ball and he fetches the ball. So now you're using the distraction as the reward. So we're going to do one of those before we start to work on distance. Okay, so what you're going to do this time, and I'll explain it first so you know what to do and then you can work on it, you're going to take a treat and what you'll do is you'll put your dog in the 'stay' position, and you're going to drop the treat out, try not to toss it as if you want your dog to fetch it, but you're going to drop the treat out somewhere near your body. If your dog gets up to go for the treat and try to grab the treat, I want you to cover it with your foot very quickly so he can't get it, and quickly tell him, "Ah", put him right back and there's not reason to grab for him. Use your body to block him, use your voice to get him back into position. Pick the treat up again and then try it again. Once he's holding the 'stay', when the treats on the floor, he should look to you, he shouldn't be staring the treat in as if he's trying to bring the treat into his mouth by telepathy, so he's got to look to you. If he looks to you, that's your "may I", "Okay, you can have it then. You held the 'stay', I'm proud of you, you looked for permission, you may have it." So whenever you're ready, put the dog into position, tell him to stay, just carefully drop the treat so it's not a big tease. Again, if he gets up for it, cover it with your foot, give him an "Ah, ah", put him back into that position real fast, pick the treat up again, try it again, if he keeps getting up, if you've tried it several times and he keeps getting up then what I want you to do is maybe the dropping of the treat is too difficult. So you can see that we're setting him up to succeed, take a treat and just open the palm of your hand away from your dogs nose, maybe three feet out. If he gets up just take it away. Remove it, put him back in position. Again, once he's holding it, he looks to you for permission, tell him "okay" and release him to the treat. Wonderful.

Pia Silvani: Lets move on to distance now, so now you got plenty to work on for the next two weeks. So, when we tell our dogs to 'stay', we want our dogs to hold the position regardless of how long I tell you, and obviously they're not going to hold it forever, so be aware of that. Don't expect the unrealistic, but more importantly you've got to get out and do distractions, everywhere, all kinds. It doesn't matter how far away from you you are, but remember the key is your dog is always, always released when you're by his side. You must go back to your dog, touch your dog, and then release your dog. So I'll give you a real life example that happened to me the other day, I was out with Lance, and I was throwing the Frisbee, and I'm a terrible Frisbee thrower and I happened to throw it... I'm getting better, I shouldn't say that, I'm getting better. I just happened to throw it into a tree and I thought, "Oh darn". I was in the woods, and I put him in a 'down/stay', and I had to sort of like climb up into this little tree, and I went to turn around to tell him he was a good boy for holding the 'stay', and unbeknownst behind me there were five deer. And I thought, "Oh, darn", and I quietly reminded him to stay and he just happened to turn his head to see it, and I quickly told him again, "Stay" in a very firm voice. Not singing it, firm "Stay. Good boy." Started to walk close to him, he's been trained around distractions, he's been trained at a distance, he knows the only thing that releases him is my hand and my rare below K. He watched the deer go by, and I had to be real careful, this is where play comes in, I released him with an okay, and I threw the Frisbee in the opposite direction. So there was his reward for holding the 'stay'. So you're not obviously going to do that right away, we're going to take one step at a time. Let me explain it first, and then you can do it. You'll put your dog in the position, and what you're going to do is you're going to rock back. So basically what you're doing is you're sort of taking a step back away from your dog, and then you take a step back in and then release the dog. So right now we've got short duration. So we're going back again, since we're doing something new we go back to short duration. So again, as a reminder, it's a rock back step, so you're just a step away, you step back in and then you release and reward. So let's try that. So step, tell the dog to stay, rock back, praise him as you rock back, rock back in, and then pat, pat, okay, release and reward. Do it one more time, and if your dog is successful with that as I talk you through it, then take two steps back and then two steps in. So you gradually, you're going to build on this, so I'm going to have you work on this as I sort of talk you through how you're going to get duration. So you might rock back once, and again, if you find that you get three steps away and your dog keeps breaking at three steps, stick with two. There's no reason to rush it. So your goal is, again, to try to calmly step back, and step back in, and release. So you keep practicing this to see how many steps you can get away from your dog. And again, the key is not to leave the dog and go to another room, but step away from the dog. Lets see if you can get, try four or five steps. See if you can get four or five steps. If you think the dog is going to get up, okay, give a little "Ah", before he gets up. You can beat that, that'll be wonderful. It means you're paying attention. And if he puts himself back in position, just remind him to stay again so he realizes what he's doing. Okay.

All right. And release him. Give him a little play break in between so his brain gets a little rest, and again, if your dogs not into the playing so much, I think it's worth working on. You can tease him with a toy, just have him chase something around the room, sometimes you can put a ball or a sock where they can chase that around, anything that your dog likes, or just give him a belly rub, give him a nice little break here. Find his favorite spot. Remember in our first session we rated our rewards, so go back and look at your list if you need to figure that out. Now, your goal, I'll have you practice one more here, your goal is to be able to get six feet away from the dog, go back in and release. And then, this is the difficult one, you should be able to get six feet away and then make

a full circle around your dog, all the way to the right, always going back to front, and then going back in and release, then backing up six feet away, then going all the way to the left around your dog. The most difficult spot is going to be obviously behind the dog. Your dog is more than welcome to turn his head to look to see where you are, but he's not allowed to move his body. He's got to keep his butt planted and those paws on the ground at all times. So what you might do is you might want to put the dog into a 'stay' and take one step off to the side as if you're starting your circle. Take one step back again, go into your dog calmly and give your dog a nice happy release.

Pia Silvani: Alrighty. Have a seat with your dog now and just relax a little bit, and I'm going to give you some ideas to do, so you can have pen and paper in hand. So you can see how we're slowly building on that duration and we're adding the other two D's in, distraction as well as your distance. Again, when you're outside make sure that you're in a safe area, if you're adding distance, so you might want to be on a lead. If you're doing real well, put your dog on a long line so you can get greater distance away from your dog at any point. Put your dog into a 'stay' and have him near a street or, you know, the driveway where there are blind spots. So again, the key is always safety, or I wouldn't put my dog in a 'stay', walk away from away from his as dogs are running loose in a park for example. I'm going to stay close to my dog at that point. If you're working distractions and you feel like the dog is really, really interested in the distraction and you're having a difficult time and you feel like you've given some space, what you can do is have a couple treats in your pocket and as the distraction is approaching, then you can give your dog a treat as your praising him, "Very good job. Well done." So this way he starts to say, "Ah, when distractions approach, if I look over to my owner there might be a possibility that I get a reward", but the treat does not mean, that is not your release. That's critical. The dog shouldn't say, "Gee, thanks for the food, I'm up now." So remember, the only thing that releases the dog is your hand on the dog's body and a pat, pat release, and then you can reward the dog. So again as a reminder, lets just say you're going to use a dog walking by the street as your distraction. So your dog is in a 'sit/stay' next to you, the other dog might be ten feet away approaching, your dog sees the approaching dog, you're going to start to feed him, then praise him, "Good boy. Very good." When the distraction leaves, so the dog passes, maybe out of sight, then it's, "Okay", pat, pat, you can throw in a little tug game if you like. So your goal for the next two weeks, work on all three D's so you get that reliable 'stay', and then we'll challenge you a little bit more.

Pia Silvani: Unfortunately we're out of time for today. If you want more information on the topics that we've 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 a puppy I'd recommend that you get the puppy manual, if you've got an adult dog, the basic manual. You can email our office manager Tracy Hofer at [thofer](mailto:thofer@sthuberts.org), that's t-h-o-f-e-r @sthuberts, all one word, s-t-h-u-b-e-r-t-s, dot org, o-r-g ([thofer@sthuberts.org](mailto:thofer@sthuberts.org)). So as always, a special thanks to our producers for making this show happen. Please go to [petliferadio.com](http://petliferadio.com) and click on *Teacher's Pet*. Also if you have any questions, comments or ideas, anything you'd like me to work on, please email me at [pia@petliferadio.com](mailto:pia@petliferadio.com). So until next time, this is Pia signing off. Thanks so much for your interest in Pet Life Radio.

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