

# Teacher's Pet Sessions

## Training Session 5 – “Wait!” Stop Moving Forward!

Announcer: You're listening to PetLifeRadio.com

[bell rings]

Woman: OK class, take your seats. I said take your seats. Class, sit! I swear you're acting like a bunch of animals.

[dogs bark]

Woman: Pet Life Radio presents *Teacher's Pet*, where you'll learn to understand and communicate with your pet and train them to be the best pet they can be. It's time to see the world from their 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 will be working on a new behavior: “Wait”. Every behavior you teach your dog should have a specific definition so it's clear to you as well as your dog what is expected.

So if we're going to define what “wait” means, the definition of wait is: the dog is not permitted to move forward without making eye contact with you and getting your permission to move forward. Your permission phrase or word will be your release word that you've been using, such as “OK”.

Think of “wait” as putting the dog on hold. He's in neutral gear and ready to move when you say so. So it's typically used at stairways, street crossings, doorways and any other threshold. So teaching “wait” makes coming in and out of doors convenient as well as safe.

So if you're leaving your home or getting out of your car with your hands full of packages or young children jumping out of the car, you'll be able to tell your dog to wait and know that he's not going to jump out of the car ahead of you. So remember, you don't want him to go through the door ahead of you unless you give him permission with your OK.

You can also use “wait” when you're putting down food for your dog to eat so that he doesn't dive into it immediately. Many people use it as they're getting down a flight of stairs. They may tell their dog to wait so they can get to the bottom safely carrying a baby or maybe an elderly person going down the stairway. So if you want to put your

dog on hold, tell him to wait and then release him when you get to the bottom of the stairs.

So before we begin our training session, as always, if you don't have your dog some yummy treats in your tug toy, now is the time to get them. Also, again, as a reminder, you'll need a pen and a piece of paper to take some notes. So we'll take a short break right now and when we return we'll start our first steps on wait.

Woman: OK class, grab your tuna flakes, biscuits and bones, *Teacher's Pet* will be back in two shakes of a tail, right after recess.

Woman: OK 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! OK, *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. Thanks for joining us. Today we're going to work on the behavior "wait".

Many times people confuse "wait" and "stay". They are as different as "down" and "come". Think of "stay" as the car in park and wait as a car in neutral or idling. With "stay" the dog is never permitted to move until you return to him, place your hand on his body and release him with "OK". Remember you can't start a parked car without going to the car and turning the key.

When you tell your dog to wait, however, he may change positions. He may back up; he may move from a sit to a down, but he is never permitted to move forward. You may also release him from a distance, but only after he's made eye contact. Remember, this is the "May I" of dog training.

For example, you would never tell your dog to stay when you leave for work in the morning. If he truly understands that "stay" means "do not move until you return", do you think he'll be sitting there, standing there, or even laying there nine hours later? I hope not.

So instead you tell your dog to wait so he doesn't bolt from the door. Now closing the door will be his release and he can go back into the house and relax.

Another example might be, you would not tell your dog to stay in the car when you quickly ran into the store for a carton of milk. So think about that again. If he truly understands what stay means, he should be in the exact same position that you left him when you return with your carton of milk.

Again, obviously, not very practical. So let's start off first teaching "wait" with a food treat. So what I'd like you to do is get a few food treats out of your bag and we'll move on to the first step. And at the end of today's session I'm going to teach you how to work on it at the front door.

So let's begin by putting your dog in the "sit" position. Now you're not going to tell the dog to wait until you know the dog understands what the behavior is and he's offering the behavior. If you're just going to tell him "wait" for example, the dog would have absolutely no concept of what you were asking him.

So once you hold that food treat out and the dog moved forward to get the treat, he's pairing up that word with what he's doing at that particular time. So he might think that "wait" means "Move forward towards the treat."

A good example of what people do is, when their dog is barking at the door and they want their dog to be quiet, for example. So we know what "quiet" means. They turn to the dog and yell "Quiet!" and the dog continues to bark and they shout louder, "Quiet!" So now when you think about how dogs learn, he probably thinks that "Quiet" means "bark louder" or vocalize of some sort.

So I'll let you know when to put the cue on but say nothing at this time. What you're going to do is you're going to wait the dog out. So put your dog in a seated position and what I'd like you to do is put a treat in your fist. Close your hand around it, put the treat in your hand and hold it about three feet out in front of your dog's nose.

If your dog moves forward to go for the treat, I want you to quickly take it away. It should just fly away. So you're going to lift your hand up and away. Wait for your dog to sit again. If he doesn't, tell him to sit and re-present the treat. So you're going to again tell the dog to sit, put it at his nose level three feet away from his nose, so it's not too close. If he jumps up or moves forward to get it, you can also give a little "Eh!" as a warning. Just take it away. So you're going to take your fist and immediately bring it up to your shoulder so it flies away.

So the dog is going to start to learn that every time he moves forward, the food treat, what he wants, goes away. So again, tell the dog to sit, put the food treat out in front of his nose again. Three feet out, not too close and if at any time the dog is waiting for one second, that's all we're looking for. You're looking for a pause. Right now we're not so worried about eye contact, we'll work on that later. Let's raise the criteria. But you're looking for that momentary pause.

If you think the dog has paused and truly is waiting for that one second, tell him "OK" and toss the treat forward to encourage the dog then to move forward. Once you've got that, put another treat in your fist and let's try it again.

So you're going to reseat the dog, tell the dog to sit and again, it makes no difference if you're having trouble getting your dog to sit. He can certainly do this from a stand. If, say, you put him in a sit and he lies down for example, that's perfectly fine. He's not in a state position. Remember, he's in a pause or wait position.

So have him sit again, take the treat, it's a closed fist, still on a closed fist. Present it nose level three feet out. If he's holding it for a second, mark it with "yes" and "OK" and move the treat forward so he gets the treat.

Now if he's doing that, now is the time, just like we did when you were teaching your dog "stay" in previous lessons. Now you're going to start to add a little bit of duration onto this. Now we don't go from one second to ten seconds – that's not setting the dog up to succeed. So let's go from one second to three seconds this time and see if he can hold it for three seconds.

Now when we're working on duration, remember this is the time where you can say "Good dog", "Good boy", "Good girl", "Well done" – anything that will keep the dog in that position at that time. So think of that as the glue that holds the dog in a position.

So again, tell the dog to sit, present the treat out. In your mind, quietly, as you say "Good boy" and "OK" release and toss the treat forward so he's encouraged to go forward. If he does not get up for the food, take a step forward towards the food. Some dogs, they're a little bit worried about getting up to get the food as if they're saying to yourself, "Are you sure? Are you sure you gave me that OK release?"

Alrighty, OK, let's try it one more time and this time you're going to release the dog to the treat and take a little tug break in between. Remember when you're training your dog, you don't want to do too many drills over and over and over again. What will happen is the dog's brain will become fried after a while and you might see really good performance turn into sloppy performance because you're doing too many. So you always want to end with the dog having some fun, wanting to do more. You take a little break and you go back to it again.

So let's try it one more time. Tell the dog to sit and anywhere between three to five seconds this time if your dog is doing well. If he keeps getting up, you're moving too quickly. So that's a signal for you. If you continually have to correct the dog, that's a signal for you that you are moving too quickly for the dog.

So one more time, tell him to sit, hold the treat out in front, see if you can get three to five seconds and whenever you think you're ready or if you think he's going to get up release him before he gets up. And then it's "OK" and toss the treat. So that's critical and you're watching your dog carefully. Any time you think he may get up, even before he gets up, release him before. Otherwise you're fixing the problem and that's not good dog training. You don't want to have to continually fix the problem during the acquisition phase. So it's critical that the dog succeed.

Give him a quick little tug break so he's tugging in between. If he's looking at your treats instead and he's more interested in the treats, just ignore it. Let him realize that this is not the time for food, this is the time to play in between. So this way it balances out; the dog should have an equal balance between play and food. And as I've discussed in past sessions, play is going to be a lot more effective outdoors when you're training than food. So it's critical, critical, critical that you start to play in all sorts of environments.

OK, use your release word, whatever that is. Give release and put your dog back in a sit. Now if your dog was successful with those first steps, we're going to take the next step, which is step two. If your dog was not successful, what you're going to do is continue to practice at your dog's level. Make sure you don't move ahead until your dog was successful with the previous step.

So now what you're going to do, and this is going to be more difficult, instead of the food being in a closed fist, what you're going to do is present the food the same way, three feet away, but now your palm is going to be open. So the food is visible to the dog. That's going to be a greater temptation obviously to the dog, to move forward, because now he sees the food.

If he moves forward, very simply you're just going to close your fist very quickly so he can't get it and make it fly away so it goes away. Same exact steps: put the dog into a

sit, present the food with an open palm – you're still not saying "wait". If the dog holds the position for just a few seconds, tell him "OK" and toss the food forward, away from the dog.

Remember, do not give the food to the dog in the position because then he is not understanding that the release is to move forward. It's a big mistake that many people make. The dog does it and they present the food hand to mouth while the dog is still waiting. So you always want the dog to realize that when I say "OK", move forward.

So I want you to practice that a couple of times as I talk you through it. And again, gradually build on the duration so you're presenting the food treat with an open palm. You're waiting for the dog to hold the position.

If he's doing really well at this stage, now you can start to look for eye contact. So what you're going to do is you're going to present the food again, three feet out, dog's nose level. If he's really holding it quite nicely, see if you can get a little more duration and the second he makes eye contact with you, mark it with a "yes" and toss the treat.

So what we're going to do is take a real short break to hear from our sponsors. So during the break what I'd see you to do is see how many repetitions you can get and see if you can get some eye contact. Again, remember, don't do any more than three sessions before you take a little play break and then go back to it again. But your goal when we return is that you have eye contact.

But what we're going to do now is take the next steps. Again, don't worry if you haven't got the eye contact. You can build on that gradually. So what you're going to do, your goal now is, what I'd like you to do is now add the cue. Your dog should, at this point, have waited for a few seconds. So you're going to put your cue on; if you wait just prior to presenting the food.

So put your dog into a sit and right before you present your food with an open palm, you're going to say "wait" and present the food. The dog should be holding the position; so now he's connected that word along with the behavior. If he makes eye contact, tell the dog "yes" and release the dog to the treat. If you're not there yet, as long as he's in the position, release him with "OK".

Alright, let's give that a try again. Again we're adding the cue on now. So put the dog back into the seated position. Remember once again you're going to say the word just prior to presenting the food. If your dog is not waiting, do not add the verbal cue on yet. You have time to do that. The dog must be offering the behavior before you put the cue on.

So just prior to presenting the food, tell the dog to wait and present. Calm praise or just be silent. Many times if you're silent, the dog tends to look up into your eyes instead, as if to say, "What do you want me to do?" And the second he looks up into your eyes, that's when you can say "Yes, that's what I want. Now you can get the food." All right.

Now you can get back into the position. We're going to make it a little bit harder now. Now the goal is for you to get the piece of food out of your hand and place it on the floor. So what you're going to do, you're not going to three feet nose level to the floor. So you're gradually going to get the food to the floor by slowly bringing it down. You want to be careful, however, not to lure the dog. You don't want the dog to be confused as if

you're teasing the dog. I see many times people will inadvertently do, what they will do, they will gradually, painfully bring the food down to the floor and the dog just can't stand it anymore and he gets up.

So let's say you're three feet away and maybe your hand is three feet off the floor, two feet off the floor. So maybe you want to go two feet from the floor to one foot off the floor instead of dragging it down. So whatever you're comfortable, what I'd like you to do is, again, put the dog in a sit, tell him to wait. He's familiar with that. Present the food a little bit closer to the floor this time. You might need to shorten up your duration because you just made change. Every time you make a slight or sudden change there you might need to change it.

If he's waiting a few seconds or if he makes eye contact, tell him "yes" and release him with "OK". All right. Your goal now is for you to put it on the floor. Now we'll go over that; I'll talk you through it. Again, if you can't get to it today, that's fine but I'm going to teach you exactly how to do this.

Now listen up before you do it. What you're going to do is you're going to put your dog into a sit. You're going to take the food treat and you're going to place it on the floor. So again you're going to tell your dog to wait before you place it on the floor. Once it's on the floor, many times the dog thinks, "Ah ha, here's my chance. It's on the floor, dive for it. Let's see who can get there first!"

You have to be quicker than the dog. So you can either put your foot on the treat so your dog can't get it. You can cup your palm over the treat so your dog can't get it and pick it up. Or you can step in front of the dog and body block the dog so this way the dog can't move towards the treat. So you've got to move very quickly.

Your goal for this week will be that you put your dog in a sit, you tell your dog to wait, you place the food treat on the floor, the dog is waiting. The dog looks to you for permission, "May I go get that treat?" When he says, "May I?", "Yes you may. OK, take it."

And you can also work with this with your dog's food bowl. Teach him some manners. So rather than having him dive in or he's jumping up in the air trying to get the food, he's so anxious to be fed. Put your dog in a sit, tell him to wait and start to bring your food bowl down to the ground. If at any time he moves forward, just quickly bring the food back up. If he's getting real pushy about it, what I'd do is take my food bowl, the dog's food bowl and put it back up on the counter. Take maybe a five second, ten second break and then try again. Let him know that his pushy behavior is not going to get him what he wants.

Alright, why don't you have a seat at this point and I'm going to tell you what your goal is for the front door now. So here's where you're going to need a paper and pen so you can write down any notes that you want.

You're going to start at your doorway and make it simple. Always make sure that you have a leash on your dog so your dog won't bolt through the door. It's really for safety reasons but you're not going to use the leash to hold the dog back, that's important. It's just there so the dog won't bolt through the door.

Again, you're not going to tell the dog to wait at the door until you know that the dog will wait at the door. So approach the doorway, put your hand on the doorknob and just gradually open it a crack. If your dog moves forward at all, immediately close the door. So his freedom is taken away when he moves forward and you'll start again. You'll open it a crack; if your dog is waiting, calmly praise him and try to open it a little bit more, a little bit more, a little bit more.

Any time that dog moves forward you can give a quick body block and quickly close the door. And again you don't want to obviously slam your dog's head into the door; that's why the body block would help. But you're going to close the door quickly so the dog understands that if he moves forward, his freedom is taken away. He will not have permission to go through that doorway.

You're going to progress with that until you can open the door the entire way. Once the door is open, your dog must look to you for permission. When your dog looks to you for permission, you're going to release him with an "OK" but stand still. Do not go through the door with the dog. You want to teach the dog that he's permitted to go through but not bolt at this point.

Think about it realistically. You've just given your dog permission to get out of the car and little did you know there was a party of squirrels behind you. The next thing you know, you've given him permission but he's off and running chasing the squirrels, possibly across the street.

So when you release him, you want him to go out the door, turn his body and look at you. So how you're going to do that is you're going to stand still once you release your dog. You have your leash in hand; stand completely still, don't yank on it. As you give your dog permission, he might hit the end of the leash. Once he does and he turns back to look at you, tell him "yes" and then give him a treat. So you're patterning him to wait at the door, look for permission, go out when I tell you but turn around and that's when you'll get your reward. So you'll practice that several times.

Now what you can also do, another option, will be you go first. There might be times when you want your dog to wait, for example, in the car. He's going second, it's not always the dog going first but he might go second. And there are no really hard-core rules on this, who goes first, who goes second. You may have heard this on television or read it in books that the owner should always go first through the doorway so you are in charge and you are the leader. I don't believe in that.

Sometimes when I have lots of things in my hands, we're heading towards the car, I want to make sure my dogs go first because I don't want them to suddenly decide, "Oh, I see something!" and off they go. And I'm tumbling down the stairs with packages in my hand. So most of the time, I have to admit, I send my dogs first. I tell them – my release word through the door is "go". So they know it means "You may go" but it doesn't mean that they push me out of the way. They still wait but they're waiting to see: Do we go first or does she go first? So that's up to you.

So what you're going to do this time at the doorway, you will tell the dog, again, once he understands what "wait" means you'll tell the dog to wait and you'll now pivot in front of the dog so you're toe-to-toe. You'll take one step back, you'll take another step back so you're stepping away from the dog. If at any time your dog makes a forward movement where he moves forward, that's a signal for you to move forward. So it's sort of like a

cha-cha step. The dog moves forward, you move forward. Your forward motion should push the dog back.

So what you're doing in a sense is you're body blocking the dog and your body is signaling the dog to back up. So you don't have to say anything. Be careful not to pull on the leash because if the dog is dependent on the leash to stop him, then what happens if you don't have the leash? He won't understand. So teach the dog that my body can stop you at the same time.

So one more time you'll tell your dog to wait at the doorway. You'll pivot in front so you're facing your dog toe-to-toe and you'll gradually take a step back and another step back so you're adding distance in front of the dog. Your goal in two weeks, you have two weeks, is that you can stand six feet out in front of the dog; the dog is inside, you're outside and you can release the dog.

Now when I release the dog, what I typically do is I will step to the side, I will allow the dog to go with my "OK" but remember it doesn't mean "Bolt and run through the door." It means "Permission granted, you may go through the doorway." You asked for permission by making that eye contact but turn and look at me.

So same scenario with the car. If you're opening up your hatchback or you're opening the dog's crate in the car – you can practice that with the crate too. If you've got a dog that bolts through there, any type of gate – immediately you're holding the leash, you tell your dog "OK", your dog should jump out of the car, turn to look at you to see what is the next signal.

So you might want to practice a sit so the dog learns how to jump out of the car and sit. It comes in very, very handy.

OK, unfortunately we're out of time. So don't forget to check back with us for training session number six. I'd like 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 for the show, don't forget to email me at [pia@petliferadio.com](mailto:pia@petliferadio.com).

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

[bell rings]

Woman: School's in session on Pet Life Radio with *Teacher's 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](http://PetLifeRadio.com).

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