

## Your Dog's "sit" Cue



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My dog, Pepper, performing a solid sit-stay in front of a box of treats

Sit Stay: The most important cue your dog can learn

Take a moment to think of all the problem situations your dog can get into. The list is probably endless.

Now, think of how many of those situations you could avoid by simply asking your dog to sit and stay.

IF Fido is sitting, unless he has a giraffe neck, he can't heckle visitors when they arrive in your home.

If Spot is sitting (over there), unless you have extremely large feet, he can't get under them. If your dog knows "sit-stay" when the pizza delivery guy rings the doorbell, you can open the door without acting like a soccer goalie trying to keep your dog inside.

"Sit" is the first cue everyone teaches their dog and it's also the cue that is the most under-utilized.

Actually, your dog always knew how to sit, that's standard equipment for all dogs. The trick is to teach the dog to sit when and where you want him to.

The "sit" part of the cue is easy.

It's the "sit" NOW (not after you're finished chasing the squirrel) and "stay" seated longer than if you just sat on hot coals) that's a bit more difficult.

The "sit-stay" cue should also be met when the cue is given different ways, for instance, while your back is to your dog, or at a distance, etc.

It is a cue your dog should follow regardless of distractions; distance (how far away you are when you give the cue); and duration (how long you require the "sit" position to be held).

Assuming your dog already knows how to sit, in the course of your daily routines, ask your dog to sit. When she/he complies, reward with a great treat that you have stashed away in your pocket. Start to use the rewards in your environment as reinforcement for a solid "sit". For example, before you begin a play session, ask for a "sit". Do the same at the back door before letting your dog outside for a romp in the yard. The goal is to create the association, "sit = great stuff" for your dog.

After this is in place, you can start to work on your "stay" cue.