



Intermediate • Week 1

Heather James, CPDT-KA

Welcome Back!

Welcome back to Happy-Go-Lucky! In intermediate obedience we'll work on proofing known behaviors and improving your skills. We'll also be learning some new things, and new ways to work with and enjoy your dog. Let's get started!

Stay

Do you remember the three D's of stay? Duration, Distraction & Distance. While proofing stay, attempt to work on just one of the three D's at a time. If you are working on Duration, remain close and attempt to keep distractions to a minimum. If you're working on Distraction, limit the amount of time you are asking your dog to remain still. If you're working on Distance, try to keep both duration and distractions to a minimum. Remember to return to your dog 99 out of 100 stays to reward and release. I know it's fun to call your dog out of stay and watch their happy little faces come running towards you, but called out stays are flighty stays, and your dog will be far more likely to release themselves when you didn't ask them to if you practice calling them to you too often.

As your dog's success with stay grows, can you practice having two paws in a different place? Maybe the front paws are on a stair or step. Maybe their back paws are on a chair. If you practice stays with your dog in funny positions it can really integrate that stay means "don't move". Have fun with it!

Stand

Stand is simply getting your dog to stand on all fours and remain in that position. As simple as it sounds, it can be challenging to let your dog know that what they're doing is what you're wanting. A lot of dogs while in training are experts at sits and downs, and when working on a stand, will automatically offer you previously learned behaviors.

With your dog in a sit or a down, use a treat and lure right from their nose and straight out and say "stand". Unlike a lot of other commands, we're going to go ahead and start using the verbal right away, as this is an easy behavior to lure. Your dog will follow the lure and move to get the treat. The second they're up on all fours, say "yes!" and reward. Timing is important, as a sit or down is very likely to immediately follow the stand request. Also, it's called "stand" not "take five steps", so make sure you're luring, marking with a "yes!", rewarding and halting any additional forward movement.

Verbal Cues & Hand Signals

Here in Intermediate Obedience, I think it's realistic that your dog can work on both verbal cues and hand signals for their basic commands. Establish what your hand signals will be for "sit", "down", and "stand" and then let's see if we can't get your dog responding to each one on both the verbal and the hand signal. Hand signals are basically a modified lure. You have already been using your hands to get your dog into their positions, so now it's about shortening those movements. I use an arm straight up in the air for "down" so it can be a little more challenging, since it is very different from the lure, but the learning method is the same.

With a treat in your hand, speak the command you wish your dog to accomplish, wait a second or two for processing, then lure into the position and reward! Repeating this command, pause, assist, reward

pattern will teach your dog that when you make a certain sound, a desired action is associated. Before long, when you speak your command, your dog will process the behavior. With the hand signals, attempt to gradually lessen the movements you're making for the lured behavior. Instead of luring right at the tip of your dog's nose for the sit command, try smaller motions. Your dog will catch on quickly what body movements of yours equal a position of theirs.

Touch

Teaching your dog to touch the palm of a flat and open hand is an easy and enjoyable trick. Start with a treat trapped under your thumb in the palm of your open hand. Your dog will "touch" your hand in an attempt to sniff or lick this treat. Say "yes" and release the treat from your hand to your dog. Repeat this method several times. After a bit of practice, remove the treat from your hand but have one handy, your dog has successfully touched your hand and found a snack many times, he is very likely to try again. As soon as he touches your hand say "yes" and get that treat to him. Keep this up and as soon as you've discovered your dog will be reliably touching your hand, you may add the verbal cue "touch". Remember to stare at your hand to help them out. Also, try very hard to avoid closing the last inch or so with your hand and bopping your dog on the snout. That version of the game is way less fun. As you experience success, you can switch hands, switch directions, put your hands in the air and more! It can be a great way to keep your dog's focus in distracting situations, and have lots of fun.

Flip Finish (Return to Heel)

This maneuver allows you to return your dog to the heel position. You will be luring your dog to make a small u-turn on your left side. This will begin by a treat in your left hand and your dog in a sit in front of you. Take a large step backwards with your left foot, and lure your dog along with you as you stepped. Your dog is now facing behind you and lined up on your left side. Now with the treat still on your dog's nose, return your feet together, turning your dog in towards your body. Your dog will have made a turn and is now facing forwards, lined up on your left side. Practice this many times until you feel comfortable with the motion. If you're having great success, you can try to eliminate the step. Also, your dog loves to look you square in the face and complete your commands. See if you can have your dog sit in the heel position. How about down? Practice in lots of different places, lots of different ways.

Leave-It & Come

Your dog should have a decent grasp of "leave-it" at this stage, so we're going to add "come!" to the exercise. Place a "leave-it" object on the floor in your house. This could be anything – the cat's food dish, a random plate, a paper towel, anything your dog will be interested in, and with your dog on leash, approach the vicinity of the "leave-it" item. When your dog shows any attention towards the item, say "leave-it" followed by "come!" and move away from the item. Practice inside, outside, and with lots of different things. Garbage, food wrappers, or other things you might come across on a walk are great to practice with and can help you pass right on by yucky things you don't want your dog picking up.

*****Bring a Bed or Rug Next Week!*****