



Intermediate • Week 2

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Heel

Heel is a proper and precise obedience command that requires your dog to be at your side, neck right up against your leg, lined up straight, facing forward – traditionally on your left. Like so many things we teach our dogs, when learning “heel” it is not time for a verbal cue until you’ve mastered the lure and reward. Place your leash in your right hand, and a treat in your left hand. With the leash draping across your body, put the treat right on your dog’s nose to hold them in that heel position. When ready, take just one or two steps forward together, say “yes!” and reward. If your dog moves ahead of you for any reason, stop moving and correct your dog. Use the “flip-finish” from last week to return your dog to the heel position, say “yes!” and reward, then begin moving again.

As your dog is having success, gradually start moving the treat a little higher, away from directly in front of his nose. Go a couple steps and quickly return the treat right to the nose for reward. See if your dog can sit in this heel position. How about down? In order to keep your dog in a nice heel, tight and close to your body, you can use walls, pens, hallways, hedges, parked cars, etc. to encourage your dog to stay right there next to you. Set a small goal for yourself and see if you can walk across your living room in the heel position. Remember to release your dog from “heel” once you’ve completed the training moment and session.

Stay

Keep practicing those stays! Remember to work in variations of duration, distraction and distance while training. Have fun with it – see if you can put your dog in various positions and have them stay. Maybe you can have them put their front paws on a bench, with their back paws on the ground and ask for a stay. As you proof the behavior, your dog will start to connect the dots that “stay” means “I don’t move”. The more unique ways you practice, the better your dog will understand. See if you can put your dog in a sit and walk around them. How about a down? Put your dog in the heel position and ask them to stay. Can you walk three steps away from your dog when asked to stay in a heel position? How about a stand stay?

Passing Other Dogs

It’s important then when you’re out and about you can pass other dogs politely. Best practice is to work on getting your dog’s attention and using the commands that you’ve learned so far. “Watch” with smiles and positive feed back while continuing to walk can have real success. A key to easing dog encounters is continued motion. A stopped dog can be a stuck dog, fixating and perhaps even vocalizing at an approaching stranger. Try to keep moving along and monitoring how much distance you need to have a successful pass. It is completely natural and normal to need a little extra space to pass a dog you meet while out and about. Do you need to step off the curb? Cross the street? Utilize visual barriers like hedges or parked cars? No problem – work your own dog at their own current level and abilities. Since your dog is likely still learning their “close” and “heel” commands, with continued practice, you can start working on using these tools as well.

Recalls

Continuing working on “Come” with your dog. Practice everywhere you can, and in as distracting situations as you can, all while being safe and successful. Your dog should be able to come when called passed objects they do not understand or recognize. You can practice at home by setting up random things like umbrellas, overturned pots or pans, a suitcase, or anything else they’re not familiar with and practice calling them passed the items. If they don’t stop to investigate, make sure your reward profusely! “Yes!” and lots of little treats, smiles, and happy pets. Remember to be happy when your dog comes when called. No one wants to go visit a grouch.

Sitting for Pets & Attention

Everyone wants to pet a nice polite dog. Practice having your dog sit and stay for pets and attention. If you believe they’re going to jump up, practice looping the leash under your shoe and stepping on it. This prevents your dog from being able to jump were they to make an attempt. When practicing, whoever is your greeter needs to wait until you have your dog in a sit, and then they approach. For now, keep visits nice and short, then have your greeter walk away. Reward your dog for their nice stay, then release using their release word.

Go to Bed

Teaching your dog to go settle in a specific place is a very useful skill. A designated spot, still part of the action, can allow your dog to remain calm and settled while going about your daily lives – and not underfoot. To begin, grab their bed, blanket or rug, your dog, and a lot of treats. Toss a treat on the bed and say “Yes!” the second they put even a single paw on bed while they eat the goody. Repeat, repeat, repeat. After many repetitions, fake toss a treat onto their bed. The second their paw touches the bed say “yes!” and reward with a treat from your hand.

If for any reason your dog stops going on the bed with the fake toss, go ahead and revert to throwing the treat for a few more times, then try again. The fake toss turns into a pointing action, and with practice, your dog will go stand on their bed when you point at it. As your dog gets the hang of going to stand on the bed when you point at it, start adding in the verbal cue “go to bed” or similar – “go chill” “take a break” “place” “rest”, etc. The goal this week is your dog can go stand on his bed when you ask him to.

*****Remember to bring your dog’s bed again next week!*****