



## Intermediate • Week 3

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### Proofing the Release Word

You've been using a release word for your dog, but does your dog really understand it? Practice releasing your dog from positions and commands using their release word frequently. Your dog should get up, move, or cease the requested behavior as soon as you release them. While continuing to practice try to throw other words at your dog to test whether they understand their word, or just move to the sound of your voice and body language. Example: Ask your dog to sit and stay. Reward for good behavior and say "release!" Encourage them to get up and move if they do not. Repeat a few times. Now try saying random words in the similar tone to your release word like "bicycle!" and see if your dog releases themselves. Correct them if they move on the incorrect word and reward them if they stay. Get fancy and see if you can use rhyming words if you're having excellent success.

### Heel

Keep up the heel practice! Although most often used in formal obedience, heel can have practical uses. Passing other dogs, broken glass on the sidewalk, or anything else you need to carefully avoid can be artfully dodged with a well-trained heel. Practice mastering the heel indoors by using walls, furniture or the other aspects of the environment. Utilize the flip-finish or the around finish to get your dog in the correct position and practice moving throughout your home. Reward every step or two when your dog is in the correct position. When being out and about and practicing heel, you can utilize hedges, retaining walls, or parked cars to help your dog line up correctly. Remember to "release" your dog from the heel command, but maintain a loose leash.

### Stay

Let's really work on upping the distraction with your stays. As your dog continues to learn stay, you can start pushing the limits of distraction and activity. Have your dog stay while you toss a toy just a few feet out. Reward your dog in the stay position and then release to go get the toy. See if you can throw it farther or with more enthusiasm. Occasionally go get the toy yourself while your dog holds their stay, then release them to play. Ask your dog to stay and try doing simple household activities. Have them stay while you go open the fridge, stay while you sit on the couch, stay while you pick the remote up off the floor. As soon as you show interest in other things, your dog will have a harder time staying. Remember to return to your dog to reward and release, and avoid calling them out of the stay position. If they start breaking their stays, reset them to their previous position and lessen the amount of the distraction.

### Change Directions

A lot of times when out walking our dogs, we find ourselves occasionally startled or surprised by an unexpected dog walker, cyclist, child playing or anything! I like to practice with my dog by frequently walking along and changing directions. I like to cue it with something like "Whoops! This way!" and joyfully turn and walk in the opposite direction. Practice walking with your dog, and randomly switching where you're headed. This will allow your dog to be accustomed to such occurrences, and can also be an excellent loose leash walking tool! If you find your dog to be pulling you – just go the other way!

## Approaching Friends & Friendly Strangers

We're upping the ante here, and really trying to create a nice polite dog that sits when people pet him. Practice as often as you can, approaching friendly people and neighbors, asking your dog to sit and stay, then allowing them to be pet. Try to keep interactions brief, and make sure you use your release word once your dog is allowed to get up from their stay. If you're having trouble, really start working and reinforcing just regular sit & stay activities. If you have to, loop that leash under your foot and step on it to gently enforce the inability to jump. Keep practicing!

## Go to Bed

Now that we've practiced convincing your dog to move to a certain spot, the next part is getting them to lie down. Warm up and practice just having your dog move to their spot a few times then approach your dog and lure a down or use the hand signal. Reward your dog with a "yes!" and a treat or two while they're in the down on their spot, then release. Avoid using the verbal word "down" – as this cue is "go to bed" not "go to bed down". The action should include a down as part of the successful command.

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