

Teach Your Dog - Wait

What is Wait?

Wait is a momentary pause before accessing something that the dog wants, including food, attention, going for a walk, going through a doorway, play with a toy, a treat, etc. Wait is also a great way to start building a foundation for a “stay” cue.

What is impulse control?

Impulse control is teaching your dog to control his own impulsive behavior and to think before acting. Many dogs benefit from learning how to be more cooperative with you to get the things that they want. Also, we cannot always give our dogs exactly what they want at the moment that they want it so we must teach them alternate ways to ask politely for the things that they want by remaining calm and offering more acceptable behaviors than jumping and nipping.

Wait for the food bowl

Teaching a dog to wait for the food bowl is the simplest way to begin teaching “wait”.

For this exercise you will need a food bowl, a hungry dog, some yummy treats and some free time.

Ask your dog to sit while you are holding the food bowl. As the training progresses you should not have to ask for the sit each time because the dog will begin to understand that you holding a food bowl and asking for them to come close means that they are to sit down.

When the dog's butt is firmly on the ground you may begin lowering the bowl. At first, you should lower the bowl slowly and at a distance of at least 12 inches from the dog's nose and feet. If at any time the dog's butt comes off of the ground, the food bowl goes back up. The bowl becomes connected to the dog's butt for this exercise:
Butt on ground = food goes down towards the floor
Butt off of the ground = food is moved away from the floor



Additional Resources

For more information about training and behavior visit our site.

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See also:

What is Deference?

[Dr. Karen Overall's Protocol for Deference](#)

If the dog can keep his butt on the ground long enough that you can set the food bowl on the ground then you can RELEASE him to eat the food.

Wait at the door

Dogs that bolt out of doors without exhibiting impulse control can cause injury to people or other animals and can be a flight risk if the leash is not attached or if it is improperly attached. Also, teaching a dog to wait at the door is the foundation of building an improved leash walk.

Ask your dog to sit when you approach the door together. The dog should be sitting in a location that the door will not bump into the dog when it is opened. For more situations the dog should be sitting either to the side of the door or you should have your back to the door and the dog should be sitting in front of you facing you and the door. If the dog gets too close to the door, use your body to stand in front of the door and provide distance between the dog and the door. Use your body to move the dog backwards away from the door.

Again, the dog's butt is connected to the thing that he wants access to - going through the door.
Butt on the ground = door will open
Butt comes off of the ground = door will close

For doors that have slow closing mechanisms on them, you may need to use your body to block the opening of the door if the dog tries to go out before the door closes - keep this in mind when positioning the dog to sit while you open the door.

Start by touching the door handle. If the dog remains sitting, open the door while the dog's butt is on the ground. If the dog's butt comes off of the ground, close the door and repeat. When the door is open enough that you and the dog can walk through, give the dog a RELEASE cue and both of you will exit the door.

Wait for leashing

Placing the leash on a dog prior to going out for a walk can begin to set the tone for how the dog will behave while you have them out on the leash. If you start with asking the dog for some impulse control while putting on the leash and any other walking equipment (Weiss Walkie, Front Clip Harness) you can reduce the amount of stress and anxiety that fills the dog before you walk them outside. If you start out struggling to put the equipment on the dog before taking him outside you have already started the walk in a heightened state of anxiety, for you and the dog.

Many dogs will become very excited just at the sight of someone holding a leash. The reason for this is because the leash is a consistent predictor cue for a high value reward - the walk. We must restart the learning process for these dogs by teaching them to be cooperative in their leashing which will, in turn, teach them to be more cooperative during other interactions. Also, the dog's behavior while leashing will be reinforced by the walk so whichever behavior you choose to reward is what will continue to happen.

This exercise will begin with some counterconditioning and desensitization. Start with a treat pouch full of treats and a leash in one hand. Hold the leash behind your back between repetitions. Present the leash for the dog to see, hide the leash behind your back and wait for the dog to offer you a calmer behavior. MARK AND REWARD the calmer behavior with a treat from your treat pouch. Repeat while bringing the time of the treat delivery and the presentation of the leash closer together. After the dog is offering the sit at the presentation of the leash in anticipation of a food reward, then

start moving the leash closer to the dog's neck. You want to balance moving the leash closer to the dog while also creating an easy win for the dog. Move the leash closer to the dog but if the dog begins to wiggle or looks like he is about to get up from the sit, immediately remove the leash and reward him with a food treat for remaining sitting. If the dog has gotten up then you have moved the leash too close, repeat but do not move the leash so close to the dog the next time. Then, add the clicking sound of the leash as you move it closer, remove the leash and treat before the dog gets up. As long as the dog remains sitting, attach the leash to the dog's collar and reward with a food reward.

After you have the leash on the dog, move towards the door and ask the dog to "Wait" at the door.