

Train Your Dog with Food Treats

Teach your dog to Sit and Stay when you open the door.

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For each of these exercises, use your dog's kibble as the reward. Each time you see a behavior you want, mark that behavior by saying "Yes!" and then deliver the reward ("mark and reward"). Make sure you don't reach for the kibble before you mark the behavior. Verbally praise your dog while you deliver the food reward. Each training session should last only 3 to 5 minutes.

Goal Behavior: Door Boundary

When you open your front door, your dog will automatically Sit-Stay until you release him.

Training Steps

Note: Your dog must sit on cue (verbal or hand signal) before you can start this exercise.

Beginner Level:

With your dog nearby, approach the front door and reach for the doorknob. Cue your dog to sit. When your dog sits, mark and reward. Give your dog the food directly to his mouth. Walk away from the door with your dog, and return to the door and repeat this step until your dog automatically sits when you reach for the doorknob.

When your dog automatically sits when you reach for the knob, jiggle the knob, then mark and reward if your dog remains in a Sit. If he stands up, simply start over. Gradually, jiggle the doorknob more and, finally, turn the knob and start to open the door. Mark and reward your dog for remaining in a Sit. If he makes a mistake, just start over.

Gradually open the door farther, marking and rewarding your dog for remaining in a Sit. (Put your dog on a leash or long line for safety.)

Release your dog to come through the door by saying, "Okay," or "Let's Go."

Advanced Level

As you open the door, take a step across the threshold, marking and rewarding for your dog staying in a Sit.

Walk away from the door with your dog, then return to the door. Reach for the doorknob. When your dog sits, verbally praise him, then step through the door. Mark and reward your dog for staying in a Sit.

Walk away from the door with your dog, then return to the door. Reach for the doorknob. When he sits, verbally praise him, then step through the door. Mark and reward your dog for staying in a Sit, but this time, toss the food behind him so he stands up, finds the food and turns back toward the door. Be ready to shut the door or block him with your body should he choose to try to come out. If he returns to his place and sits, mark and reward generously.

Occasionally, release your dog to come through the door.

Increase the difficulty of the exercise. Continue to cross the door's threshold and add distance between you and the doorway, marking and rewarding each correct choice.

Add distractions, such as family members walking past the dog as he sits in the doorway, or talk to a neighbor while your dog stays in a Sit with the door open. Remember to mark and reward generously.

Happy training!