

Training Your Dog To Heel and Sit

Essential dog training tips.

Brought to you by Training Your Puppy in 5 Minutes

The Round Robin and the come and sit exercises will easily be transferred into working on the heel and sit. Pup already knows most of it. He knows to follow the target and that when he arrives at that target, he must sit to receive it. Thus, all you have to do is transfer your target to your left side instead of holding it in front of you. Pup will then go to your left side and sit.

Begin by having your puppy do a come and sit. As soon as he sits, place yourself at his right side, your left leg even with his shoulder. This is the proper heeling position. It is important that your puppy learns to remain in this position; otherwise, he cannot be properly attentive. You can either let the leash continue to drag or pick it up, hold it in your right hand and keep it very loose so that you don't pull against him.

Get puppys attention by showing him the treat, then keep your target by your left leg at knee level. When his nose targets on your hand (click), offer the reward as you praise him. Once he's finished with his treat, say Pup, heel and take a step forward on your left leg. Moving your left leg first becomes puppys visual cue for the heel command. He'll learn to move forward as your leg moves forward.

Go only one step and stop. Pup will most likely follow his target and move forward with you. As soon as he does, praise him (click). When you stop, say Pup, sit. As soon as he sits, give him praise (click) and treat. Keep increasing the number of your steps each time you do the heel exercise. Within a short time, you and your puppy will be walking 5, then 10, then 20 steps and more. Once you get this far, you can begin incorporating turns. Do a turn and stop directly after the turn. This will keep puppy at your side. During later training, executing turns will be the best means of maintaining your pups attention.

Do the heeling exercise only three times and then give your pup a break. This will maintain his attention and positive associations with the heel command. Within the five-minute training period, you can do a series of four or five mini-walks and several come-and-sits.

If, at any time, your puppy becomes disenchanted by his target and more interested in the leaves blowing by, place the reward under his nose and try drawing him closer to you. Decrease the amount of steps between your start and stop. Maybe his current reward isn't attractive enough. Try something else. If he was interested in the leaves or a toy, maybe holding the object of his interest would maintain his attention. The reward doesn't always have to be food. If your pup loves to chase a ball or stuffed toy, he will focus his attention on that item held in your hand.

Another thing you can do to maintain his interest once he's become rather good at heeling is to change your pace now and then. Pup must learn to remain at your side whether you are walking slow or fast. In fact, one of the ways to obtain the attention of a distracted puppy is to jog a bit. Most puppies will eagerly run after a fast-moving playmate. Make any pace changes in short bursts. Always praise your pup as he catches up with you. As soon as he's even with your leg, stop, tell him to sit and reward him with praise (click) and his treat. Should he overshoot, turn to the right and lure him back to your side, again stopping and rewarding him when he sits.

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