



Introduction To “Sit”

All puppies are born knowing how to move their body into a sitting position. We are going to add a name, or cue, to the behavior!

You are going to introduce your puppy to the verbal cue “Sit” by initially using a food lure to encourage the behavior. When we use a lure to introduce a new behavior, our aim is to fade that lure as quickly as possible.

REWARDING is when we give the treat after it is earned, and LURING is when we show the puppy the treat prior to giving the physical or verbal cue for the behavior.

How to Teach Your Puppy “Sit”

Stage 1 – Teach the behavior before adding the cue. Begin with a piece of kibble in your hand. Show your puppy that you have the kibble by presenting it in front of their nose. Do not give them the kibble at this point but do a slow lure (so that the puppy is able to follow the kibble with their nose) over his head. Your puppy should follow the piece of kibble with their nose and their butt should lower into the sitting position. As soon as your puppy’s butt hits the floor, mark the behavior with an enthusiastic “Yes!” (our marker word) and then give your puppy the piece of kibble. Follow with “Free” to release them from the position.

Please do not ever apply any pressure to your puppy’s rear end to force them into the sitting position. One of the tasks that our dogs may have to perform for a client later in life is “Brace” where the dog supports the weight of the client while they stand or transfer. If they learn to associate pressure on their back with sitting, that’s going to be hard to undo in advanced training!

Repeat this about 5 times in a row. You’re doing great if you consistently get a Sit in four out of five repetitions!

Stage 2 - Once your puppy is reliably following the treat and offering the Sit in five out of five repetitions in multiple training sessions you can begin to add the verbal cue “Sit” before you start with the lure. Be sure to only say “Sit” once!

Stage 3 - Once your puppy begins to offer the Sit on the verbal cue before you can do the lure, you can begin just rewarding the Sit and fading the lure or any physical cues, like hand signals, that you may be giving.

Adding Duration

Step 4 - Once your puppy is reliably offering the Sit with just the verbal cue (five out of five times) you can begin to add duration to your Sits by waiting a few seconds before giving the treat and releasing with Free. Once they are reliably staying in the Sit position for 3 seconds you can add one or two seconds at a time before releasing with Free.

Troubleshooting

Make sure that you are doing a slow lure. If you move too fast your puppy won't be able to follow the treat and may bite at your hand in frustration to try and snatch the treat.

Practice this cue no longer than 3-5 minutes at a time, a few times throughout the day. Puppies tend to get tired out easily, so keeping this practice short and sweet will give you the best results.

Make sure you are setting appropriate criteria for your puppy's age and the environment you are in. Just because your puppy is stellar and reliable at “Sit” at home where you have practiced many repetitions, doesn't mean that they will be reliable at class or outdoors where there are many more distractions. This is an exercise that must be repeated in multiple locations with varying levels of distraction for it to be reliable.

Some puppies may find it difficult to remain in a “Sit” if the floor is a slippery surface. If this occurs you try it on a rug or other surface so your puppy can be successful!

If you are not having success and your puppy is losing interest and starting to disengage, let them. Puppies can get frustrated too, so give them a break and come back to it later. You can always reach out to your Foster Puppy Club Leader if you're feeling stuck!

Other Useful Resources

Video – Sit Introduction