



Wait

Introduction

“Wait” is a cue we use with our puppies when we want them to remain in place for a short period of time before we give them another cue.

“Wait” can be a very useful tool we can use with our puppies to limit movement and promote good manners. What does “Wait” mean for our puppies? “Wait” means remain where you are, and further instructions are coming. Or you might prefer to think of “Wait” as a temporary pause before your puppy can expect to be released or given another cue very soon. Wait can also tell our puppies not to cross a boundary until given permission.

When we use “Wait” with our puppies, we are starting with a pause (sustained hesitation) and ending with a release (“Free”), or another cue such as “Let’s Go,” or “Load Up.”

Typical situations where we might use “Wait” might be:

- 🐾 Getting in and out of the car;
- 🐾 Walking through doorways;
- 🐾 Before your puppy gets their breakfast or dinner;
- 🐾 Coming out of their crate;
- 🐾 Crossing the street;
- 🐾 Practicing recall.

Phase 1 - Beginners - How to Teach Your Puppy to Wait

- ☐ Stage 1 - Working indoors in a low distraction environment and with your puppy on leash, ask your puppy to sit. Take a very small step away from them. Return and reward your puppy. If your puppy moves, don’t reward them and reset. Repeat this 5 times in a row

each time you train. If you are successful 4 out of 5 times you are doing great! Once your puppy is consistently reliable, you can move onto the next stage.

- ☐ Stage 2 - Take two steps away. Return and reward your puppy. Repeat this 5 times in a row each time you train. Now your puppy is getting the idea of this exercise, you can move onto Stage 3.
- ☐ Stage 3 - Now we are going to add the cue “Wait” before moving. After telling them “Wait” take three small steps away. Return and reward your puppy. Repeat this 5 times in a row each time you train. Again, if your puppy moves, reset them and try again.

When your puppy is successful with Stage 3 at least four out of five times you train, you can move onto the next phase where we will start to train “Wait” in some practical applications with our puppies.

Phase 2 - Improvers - Using “Wait” in Real Life Scenarios

As we progress with training the “Wait” behavior with our puppies, we are now going to remove the food reward and make the next thing your puppy gets to do the reward. For example:

Scenario	Release Cue	Reward
Getting in and out of the car	Load Up (in) or Free (out)	Jumping in or out of the vehicle
Walking through doorways	Let’s Go	Moving forwards
Before your puppy gets their food	Free	Breakfast or dinner
Coming out of their crate	Free	Freedom to move around
Crossing the street	Let’s Go	Moving forwards
Practicing recall	Come	Moving towards you for attention

Below are some examples of how to introduce and practice “Wait” in various real-life scenarios.

Using “Wait” to Walk Through Doorways

Start this indoors with your puppy on leash. Walk towards a doorway with your puppy on your left side. As you approach the doorway, stop and ask your puppy to “Wait.” Apply a little leash pressure to hold your puppy back if you need to and then walk forwards as you tell your puppy “Let’s Go.” Your puppy should walk through the doorway slightly behind you. If they attempt to surge forwards, use your body to block their path until they back off, relax, and walk calmly.

As this becomes more of a habit for your puppy, you can move to practicing when you are out and about.

Using “Wait” When Feeding Your Puppy

The first few times you try this, it will probably take some time and a lot of patience while your puppy works things out!

Have your puppy’s food ready in their bowl. To begin with, it is probably easier if you ask them to “Sit” first as then they are less able to jump or lunge towards their food. Once they are sitting, tell them to “Wait” and start to put their food down. If they lunge towards the food, don’t progress any further until they back off and make eye contact with you. At this point, you may need to say “Wait” again. Your puppy will very quickly get the idea that the food isn’t coming unless they wait nicely. Once you have the food on the floor, wait for them to make eye contact and tell them “Free.”

Using “Wait” for Crate Manners

Nobody likes being bowled over by an over-enthusiastic puppy exiting their crate, so this is a great application for using “Wait.”

Previously you have used a physical barrier (the crate door) to encourage your puppy to back off and wait if they are rushing the door. From that exercise, they should have learned to wait without being given a verbal cue before coming out. Now they know the cue “Wait” you can use the verbal cue before you open the crate door and then release them with “Free.” As before, if they start to rush the door when you open it, you can close it again until they back off and remember to wait.

Using “Wait” Getting In and Out of the Car

“Wait” is a very useful tool when loading and unloading your puppy into and out of your vehicle both for safety and good manners.

For loading, ask your puppy to “Sit” and “Wait” outside your vehicle. Open the door and ask them to “Load Up.” If they move before you release them with “Load Up” the first few times you try this, you can use a little leash pressure to hold them back and ask one more time for “Wait.”

To unload, ask your puppy to “Wait” as you open the door. Once you have hold of the leash, you can release them with “Free” so they can jump out.

Set Up for Success

- 🐾 Always have reasonable expectations for each training session based on your puppy’s age, emotional state and the environment that you are working in.
- 🐾 Wait is only used for very short periods of time, so do not expect your puppy to “Wait” for more than a few seconds!
- 🐾 You can use a very small amount of leash pressure to hold your puppy in place while training “Wait” in different scenarios.