

Teacher's Pet Sessions

Training Session 6 – Stay – “Wait!” - Adding Distractions

Hi, welcome to *Teacher's Pet* on Pet Life Radio. This is Pia Silvani, Director of Training and Behavior at State Hubert's Animal Welfare Center in Madison, New Jersey, and your host. This week we will expand upon the Wait exercise that we did in training session number 5. So if you haven't listened to that lesson yet, I suggest you do so first before moving on to this lesson.

We will be working today on distractions and distance with the behavior Wait. The purpose of adding distractions is to teach your dog that it's important for him to always look to you for permission before bolting through a doorway or going near something that might be dangerous to him. For example, if you dropped a bottle of medication on the floor, and your dog just happened to be walking in that direction, you would quickly tell him to 'Wait!' to stop his forward movement. And then, I might put my dog in a down-stay as I was cleaning it up. Another example might be telling the dog to 'wait' as he's heading towards the street. So what you want is, you want him to stop that forward movement toward the street. If he understands what 'wait' means, he should turn to look at you. And when he does, that's a cue for you to call him to come.

And I've said before, in order to get a high level of reliability, you must practice with your dog in new and different environments where distractions occur naturally. So this means setting your dog up around distractions so he understands that he must listen regardless of what is going on around him and what he wants. And if you're diligent about always telling your dog to 'wait' before he gets out of the car, or goes out through a doorway, what you're really doing is you're conditioning him to do that. And the result should be, is that he offers the behavior to you without you telling your dog to 'wait.' For example, I no longer tell my dogs to 'wait' when I open my car doors; they automatically know that because they've been doing that since they were young. However, if I'm not sure, for example, say they're aware we're right near the lake and the Frisbees are in the car, and they know they're going swimming and we're in the parking lot and I realize that there is traffic. I might, just to insure that they remember, I might at that point remind them, 'wait.' Just in case you forgot. So you can use it as a reminder, but at this point they're conditioned to automatically wait without me having to say it each time. So, before we begin our training session, if you don't have as always, your dog, some treats, a tug toy, now's your time to get ready, so pick everything up and obviously a paper and pen to take some notes. We're going to take a short break and, when we return, we're going to take the next steps on 'wait.'

Okay, class, grab your tuna flakes, biscuits, and bones. *Teacher's Pet* will be back in two shakes of a tail—right after recess. Let's talk pets on PetRadio.com.

Okay, class, hang up your collars and leashes. *Teacher's Pet* is back in session! Now park yourselves on the floor. I said 'park,' not bark. Okay, Teacher's Pet. Pay attention, there may be a quiz later.

Welcome back, this is Pia Silvani, host of *Teacher's Pet* on PetLife Radio. Thanks for joining us. Before we continue, let's see how far you've gotten with the previous lesson. That was training session number five. So what we're going to do, what I'd like you to do is challenge you to a few different things. You're probably going to need a treat to start with and let's see if we can use your treat and see how long your dog will hold the 'wait.' By now you've been working on this for two weeks. So the dog should be quite reliable in waiting. Now 'wait' is usually used for short durations. I wouldn't expect my dog to hold, obviously, a three-minute 'wait.' That would be silly. At that point I would put my dog in a 'stay.' So they're usually used for short durations, they're on temporary hold. So what I'd like you to do this time is not put your dog in a 'sit.' You don't want your dog to always get acclimated to sit first, then wait. He should learn that, when I tell you to wait, it doesn't matter what position you're in, you're just not permitted to move forward. So this time, don't put your dog into a 'sit,' don't put your dog into a 'down,' what I'd like you to do is tell your dog to 'wait,' and drop the treat on the floor. Now, if he should dive forward for it, thinking to himself, 'Well, I'm not in the 'sit' position, here's my opportunity, I'm up on all fours, possibly I could grab it,' you're going to quickly either body-block him as you did with the doorway, you can put your foot over the treat. If it's something gooey, obviously, make sure it doesn't get stuck to the bottom of your sneaker or your foot! Or you can cup your palm over it so he cannot get it, and then take it away.

I usually like to do a body-block, this way the dog understands. So what you can do is, you sort of, what you're playing is like a goalie, a hockey goalie. You're right in front of what the dog wants. You don't want the dog to get in there, to score, in other words. So you're playing goalie. And I would step into the dog and move him back to the position where you told him to 'wait.' So what you may need to do, if you're not at a threshold, for example, you can put something there, if you're outside some people draw a line, you can put a piece of tape, you can put a stick there to help you out, so you know if your dog's taken one step. The key is do not allow one step. One step turns into two steps, two steps turns into three steps, and before you know it you've got a dog that's walking forward in a very short period of time. So again, let's not put your dog into a 'sit.' Have him standing, if possible. And I want you to tell your dog to wait, and maybe step three feet away from the dog. And now drop the treat on the floor, as if you just happened to drop something off your plate. He should be waiting. If he does, now what I'd like you to do is, I'd like you to pick it up, look at it, he should still be waiting, and then tell him 'okay.' The dog should learn that he's not always going to be released to something. You may, at one point, for example, say you dropped medication on the floor and you told your dog to wait. He shouldn't assume that he's on hold, you look for permission, and now I dive to eat the medication. Okay, there are times when he's not going to get what he wants. Or you might've told him to wait at the front door, and then all of a sudden you realize that you've got ten deer in your front yard. You're not going to release him at that point. What you might do is close the door on him. Maybe chase the deer away and then start again. So it's not always a release just because the dog looks to you for permission. So one more time, what I'd like you to do now is, I want you to tell your dog to wait in a stand position, see if you can add some distance now between you and your dog. Drop the treat on the floor so you're no longer placing it on the floor. A lot of times when things are dropped on the floor the dog get excited, he might get a little aroused, and he might move forward. Be ready, body-block him at any given moment so he can't go forward. Make sure if you're doing your body-block that you're walking into the dog and pushing the dog back to where you originally told the dog to wait. You might need to remind him to wait again. That's not repeating the cue.

Repeating the cue would be, "Wait...wait...wait...wait, wait." Now you're sounding like a broken record. And the dog is probably thinking to himself, 'Well, I thought I was waiting, but obviously, maybe she changed the definition on me and I didn't know it.' So, again, you might need to remind the dog to wait, and if your dog is waiting, this time release him to the treat. So don't be predictable. That's the key to this, it's not being predictable.

All right, give your dog a quick little tug break now, and we're going to go on to the next step. So again, remember, tell him to take it, tease him with it a little bit if he's not taking it. By now, after so many weeks, your dog should be tugging. You could use that as the reward; give him a little mental break. If you haven't been doing tug with the dog, do a little massage, scratch him in places that he likes, wherever that could be. That could be between his eyes, a lot of dogs like it right behind the ears, the base of the tail. Again, finding your dog's spots where he really likes it and give a nice, good scratch and tell him what a good boy he is, or good girl.

All right, we're going to add some distance now between the two of you. So the next step, and before you do this, I'll explain it first, and then you can work on it. You're going to put your dog in a 'wait' at a particular spot. And now you're going to walk six feet out, away from your dog. You're going to turn, face your dog, and you're going to drop the treat down right in front of your feet. Now obviously your dog is probably going to be staring at the food at this distance here. If he's staring at it, say nothing. Don't say his name. If you say his name he's probably going to move forward very quickly, anticipating that you're calling him. So say nothing. Wait for your dog to make eye contact. When he does, tell him 'yes,' and then 'okay,' he can come get the food. All right, so now you can put the dog in a 'wait.' So, put him in a position, tell him to wait, walk six feet out, turn, face your dog, put the treat on the floor in front of your feet. If your dog moves forward, don't forget, charge in there. I want you to think of that six feet as being a danger area. There's something dangerous in there, there's a street, and you want to make sure that your dog doesn't cross over that curb, for example, or that line. So move quickly. Don't just think about this as like, 'Nooooo.....wait....' You want to quickly. Now you don't want to shout, 'wait,' also. A lot of people do that, the dog starts to move forward, they go, 'Wait!' And they start again. Well, the dog just eased his way forward a little bit. So before you know it, just as we did two weeks ago, if you allow one step, he's going to start to do two steps. If he eases his way forward, and you keep shouting 'wait,' before you know it he's going to be right in front of you. So, if at all, quickly give a little 'eh-eh,' and immediately put him back. If he makes eye contact, some dogs look up right away, other dogs think that if they stare at the food, somehow the food is going to be brought to him, through his mindset, bringing the food up into the air through him. Or they get worried it's going to disappear, for example. So wait for the eye contact, if he offers it, tell him okay, and he can have it. Now you're going to do it one more time, but this time you're going to do the exact same step, six feet out, turn and face the dog, but this time you're not going to allow him to go forward. What you're going to do is you're going to do is you're going to pick the treat up and return to the dog. So, go six feet out, put the food on the ground. If the dog is waiting, and he makes eye contact, start to pick the food up. Tell him, 'good boy.' If he moves forward because he's gotten used to going for the treat, quickly take that treat away and put him back into the position. Okay, so what you're doing is you're removing an anticipated reward. But he's got to learn that he's not always going to get what he wants. So if he holds it, what you want to do again, you want to pick it up, return to your dog, and then give your dog a little 'okay' release, and then you can give him the food treat.

All right, we're going to take a quick little break so we can hear from our sponsors. So what I'd like you to do during the break is, see what you can get. Six feet out, sometimes release the dog to the treat, sometimes pick it up and go back to your dog, give him a little pat on the body, 'okay,' move him forward, and then you can give him the treat at that time. But make sure he always moves forward, that's the key.

You were just working on 'wait' at a distance, and now what you're going to do is expand upon that a little bit more. What you're going to do is we're going to add our six feet distance. That's where your food treat, or let's call it a distraction. It can be your tug toy, it can be anything that the dog wants that's placed six feet out in front of the dog. This time what you're going to do is you're going to gradually ease your way back to your dog. So, for example, you're going to put your dog in a 'wait,' you're going to go six feet out, place the treat six feet out, and then what I'd like you to do is, start to return to your dog so you are in the middle of the food treat and your dog. So you're not facing your dog. You're actually, the left side of your body might be toward the dog, and the right side of your shoulder will be at the food treat. So you're halfway, so you're almost forming a triangle. It's dog, treat, and you're the top of the triangle, so you're angled off a little bit. Now what your dog has to do is, instead of just looking up to you for permission to get it, he's actually got to take his eyes away from what he wants by turning his head slightly at an angle. The second he does, tell him, 'okay,' and he can get the treat. Now you're going to ease your way, once your dog is back in the position, you're going to do the exact same thing one more time. And again, remember, any time the dog moves forward, make sure you're doing that body-block, don't let him get that food. So you've got to move quickly. Also he's got to look to you for permission. He can't just say, 'I can't stand it, I have to get it,' and dive for the reward, whatever that is. So use different things, whatever that dog may want.

What you're going to do this time is six feet out, place the food out, and you're going to try to get to your dog's side, your goal is to move gradually to your dog's side. So again, now he's looking further away from the treat. So, put the food out, six feet out, after you've told the dog to wait, see if you can get closer to your dog, so you're almost standing next to the dog. When you're standing next to the dog, either tell him 'good boy,' and maybe release him or, your choice, go pick the treat up. As he's still waiting, you return to your dog, and then release him and give him the food reward. All right!

Now we're going to make it a little more challenging, and I'm going through these steps quickly. Again, stay with the steps that you're comfortable with, where your dog is successful. Remember, you want to make sure that your dog is successful with each step before you move on. That's so, so critical.

All right, now, if you were able to get all the way back to your dog, so the food treat or the distraction, whatever that distraction was six feet out, your dog actually turned, looked away from the distraction, looked up to you for permission, and maybe one time you released him to the distraction, the food treat, and another time you went and got it and brought it back to him. This time the dog has got to learn to *turn* and look to you. There's going to be times when you're going to tell your dog to wait and you're not going to always be facing him. Your dog is going to be in front of you. So your dog needs to learn, when he hears the word 'wait,' he must look away from whatever he is, obviously, looking at or what he wants, for permission. So that means literally turning his head

around, to take his eyes completely off of something that he wants. So for example, let's just say, the cat is down the hallway and your dog is chasing your cat, and you've told your dog to wait. Your dog should, when you're behind your dog, your dog should look to you, take his eyes away from the cat, and that does give the cat now time to go hide, or jump up onto something. Now you can call the dog to you or, obviously, if you don't want your dog chasing cats you're not going to send the dog to the cat. That's the important key of the dog not realizing that he's always going to be released to something. So, this time what I'd like you to do is tell your dog to wait, put the object or the treat six feet out in front of the dog. Slowly return to the dog, and if your dog keeps running toward the treat, what you might need to do is put a leash on the dog. So this way you can step on the leash, so he's not always charging off and getting reinforced. And you're going to take one step behind your dog. Don't stand immediately behind the dog, maybe off to an angle to start with, so it's easier. Eventually your goal will be that you can get six feet behind your dog and immediately behind your dog so your dog really has to turn around. But make it a little bit easier for him, so stand off to an angle but you're only one step behind him. If he turns to look, one time you're going to release him to it, another time pick it up. But again you don't want to do every other one. You want to be as unpredictable as you can. So maybe you're going to release him two or three times, and maybe the next time you're going to go pick it up. Then you might pick it up two or three times, and then the fourth time you might release him to it. So he never knows what's going to happen.

And unpredictable trainers are really, really good trainers. So why don't you work on that, then you're going to have a seat, I'm going to tell you what your goal is. So do one more and see if you can get behind your dog, where your dog is actually looking away from the object, completely turning his head. If he's having a difficult time with it, you might need to put that leash back on him, and you're going to quickly step on it so he can't bolt for it. So many dogs, they're opportunists, they think, 'oh, if I get this chance, my owner's further away from what I want right now, I think I can probably beat him to it.' Don't let him think that he can do that. So you might need that extra piece of equipment there. You can add duration, but don't make it painful. So many times people, they're telling their dog to wait and they're up to fifteen seconds. That's a little unfair for the dog. Most of the time it's just, I would say I don't make my dogs wait for anything longer than ten seconds, max. Because remember, it's for safety and it's for convenience. So see where you can get and your choice once again. Either go pick it up, return to the dog, release him, so he's always going forward and getting the treat, or send him to you. If you send him to you, you can always practice a recall here; you can practice 'come.' See if he'll come back to you. And don't forget to do this in a variety of environments. Don't only use treats, take it outside, use your thresholds. So maybe if the dog, for example, is, you're going to go out and play Frisbee or tennis, retrieve with your tennis ball, with your dog. You could do the same thing—wait at the door, toss the ball outside. Toss the Frisbee outside the door. The dog turns to look at you, you can either send him to the Frisbee or the ball, or you go and get it, and when you're outside you can release him, and then toss it again. That can be the reward.

All right, have a seat, what we're going to do now is I'm going to tell you how we're going to start to work on getting the dog to stop motion. So you're going to take these steps very slowly. So you'll need your paper and pen. All right, what you're going to do now is for your homework, you're going to walk up to a threshold and you'll walk with your dog, so you and your dog are walking together. What you're going to then do is you're going to quickly—now you can use a hand signal to help the dog. The hand

signal I typically use is a pendulum swing, and it starts off open palm. If you remember, the hand signal for 'stay' is a flat palm in front of the dog's face. This will be a flat palm, but what it does, it sort of swings upward, up and over the dog's head. So when you think about it, it's coming in at nose level and it's going up over the dog's ears. So it's behind the dog's head. Sometimes what that does is, the dog tends to look up and back, and that can sometimes put him into a seated position, or that also stops the dog. So you're going to walk with your dog and as you're walking, you're going to quickly use that hand signal, that swinging upward motion, tell the dog to wait, and stop. So you're both stopping. If the dog stops with you, at that moment, mark it with a 'yes,' and release forward and play. So you both go together. So one more time, you're walking together, you're going to swing your hand up and over as you simultaneously say, 'wait.' Stop with the dog. If he does, tell him 'yes,' and then 'okay,' forward together. You both move forward together. The next step on that will be you tell the dog to wait, you pause, and then you both keep walking. Remember the dog is put in the 'wait,' not you. So the dog has got to learn, that if you tell the dog to wait, it doesn't mean just because you move forward, he moves forward. He's got to wait for permission. Gradually, you'll build up on the dog waiting, he's heading toward something, you tell the dog to wait, and you keep moving. If he keeps moving, once again, what you're going to do is, you're going to use your body-block. So that's your key, is quickly getting in there and body-blocking the dog so he can't move forward towards something.

Now some other things to think about, what you can do over the course of the week. You can take a treat and tell your dog to wait, stand next to your dog, and toss the treat out. If at any given time—you might need your dog on a leash for this—if your dog says, 'Ooh, there was a treat just thrown, or my ball was just thrown, or my Frisbee was just thrown. I'm going to run after it,' what you're going to do is you're going to stop him with the leash, and start all over again. So you don't want to shout, 'wait,' at this point. So you'll go and you'll pick up the ball, you'll pick up the treat and start again. So once again, you'll tell the dog to wait, you toss the object out, the dog should turn to look at you, 'may I go get it?' And that's up to you. You may either send the dog out with an 'okay,' or 'take it,' or you'll go get it yourself, and the dog is in the 'wait' position. To make it a little more difficult, what you can do is, you can toss the treat out and don't tell the dog to wait, for example, until the dog takes a step forward. So on his first step, he'll take one step forward, and you'll quickly shout, 'Wait!' The dog should stop in motion, turn to look at you, and then have a party! That's the key.

So, some key things to remember: do not be a predictable trainer by always releasing the dog to the distraction every time. Sometimes tell him to wait, praise him, walk and pick up the object. Sometimes toss the object back into the house or into the yard. Just because you said 'wait' does not necessarily mean that he's always going to get what he wants. Another key thing to remember, you may not always want your dog to go through the door when there's a distraction outside. So therefore, you must train him accordingly. So sometimes toss that treat, when he looks at you, remind him to wait, and go pick it up, and return to the threshold. And other times you can release him.

Unfortunately, we're out of time. Don't forget to check back with us for training session number seven and, as always, I'd like to give a special thanks to our producers for making the show happen. Please go to PetLifeRadio.com and click on Teacher's Pet. Also if you have any comments, ideas for the shows, or questions about what we've done in this hour or past shows, please email me at pia@PetLifeRadio.com. So,

until next time, this is Pia signing off. Thank you for listening, and thank you for your interest in Pet Life Radio.

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