

### **“STAND” and “BACK” (up)**

These two skills are very important for positioning your dog around wheelchairs or hospital beds, so that the participant is able to reach your dog more easily to pet. I have had to use these commands many times in the course of our visits to cancer centers, senior living centers, and hospitals. Suppose your dog sits next to a wheelchair, but is too far forward, and the participant cannot easily reach your dog's head, neck, or back. If the participant is forced to lean forward to reach the dog, they risk falling forward. So, I tell my dog to Stand, accompanied by the hand signal (so I can keep the conversation flow with the participant), then I issue the command “Back”, again accompanied by the hand signal. This is then followed by “Sit,” with the dog (hopefully) in a better position!

To teach these commands, it is helpful to use treats (or another lure, if your dog is not treat-motivated). To teach “Stand”, have your dog sit, hold the treat in front of his nose and move it forward away from his nose so that he has to stand to get the treat. This should be accompanied by the word “Stand” and reward your dog with the treat the second he stands. Practice this many times, being sure to move your hand with the treat forward and away from his nose each time. Always pair it with the vocal command “Stand”. The treat moving forward also serves as the hand signal. Eventually you can phase out the treat, but still move your hand forward in the same way. Remember that dogs pay more attention to your body language than to your voice, so you should sometimes just rely on the hand signal without the verbal command to get your dog to stand. If your dog is in a Down position next to a wheelchair, tell your dog to “Sit”, or “Up” first (whichever command you use to get your dog out of a Down position). Then proceed with issuing the “Stand” command.

To teach “Back”, have a treat handy, but don't put it right in front of his nose as you would for “Stand”. Get your dog into a Stand position, then simply start walking into him so that he has no choice but to back up. I say “Back, back, back” as many times as I need to until he has backed up sufficiently. (Sometimes you only need to say it once if he doesn't need to back up very much; sometimes you need to say it multiple times in order to keep him going if he needs to back up a larger distance.) To do the hand signal for “Back”, place your hand in front of his eyes with the back of your hand facing the dog (the palm faces you). This hand should NOT be holding any treats – Treats should be either in your other hand or your pocket. Then, keeping your fingers together, flutter your hand back and forth while walking into him for as long as it takes for him to reach the proper position. Then treat your dog immediately. Over time, phase out the verbal command sometimes, just using the hand signal. You also won't have to always walk into your dog; just moving your fluttering hand forward toward his head should be enough to get him to adjust.

YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/np8XkfM4Wdk>