

Intermediate Obedience Skills

WEEK 1

CHANGE OF PACE:

Begin by practicing your standard loose leash walk or formal heel. Then give your dog a signal or cue “shhhhh” and start to slow your pace. As soon as your dog matches your pace “MARK & REWARD”. Do the same with a fast pace. I usually use “hury hury” for the cue but you can use whatever makes sense to you.

STAND:

Start with your dog sitting or lying down, hold your lure (treat in the hand) close in front of your dog’s nose and slowly in a parallel motion move it away from your dog, saying “Fido Stand”. As soon as your dog stands up... Mark and Reward!

SEQUENCING EVENTS:

Begin to chain exercises together adding in one new cue with several previous cues only adding the “MARK & REWARD” to the new cue. For other events in the sequence you can use your duration or feedback “MARKER”. For example, if your dog knows the sit and down cue but is learning the stand cue. Say; sit....good sit, down....good down.... Stand, YES and reward. Using sequencing helps us move away from food rewards and lures for things your dog already knows and performs well.

CHANGE OF POSITIONS EXERCISE:

The goal of this exercise is to use simple cues that your dog already understands well, to teach them to listen for verbal cues rather than hand signals and body language. We first want to be sure your dog does in fact understand a verbal cue. Stand up straight, fold your hands in front of you, and without any hand signals or body language, give the cue “SIT”. If your dog sits then you are good to go. If your dog does not sit, it means he does not understand a verbal command without help from a hand signal. At this point you will need to take some time to help your dog get used to responding to verbal commands as taught in class. Be sure you always deliver the verbal cue before any physical cues are given. Give as small of a physical cue as possible, and reduce them from there.

Start by giving the cue “SIT”, “DOWN” & “STAND”. Next, give the “STAY” cue, take a step back and go through the SIT, DOWN & STAND again. Take another step back, and go through the change of position cues again, and so on until you can give your dog a change of positions cue at a 10’ distance and they understand and comply

FRONT from Heel:

Start with your dog in “heel” position (on your side). Be sure you have your lure ready (treats in your hand) before your begin. Call your dogs name and hold the treat in front of his nose. Then take one step forward at the same time saying “Fido Front” or whatever command your using for this position. Extend your arm out in front of you so your dog follows the lure, then take a step backward giving the dog room to move to the front position. Once your dog is in front of your body you can then ask him to sit then Mark & Reward.

HEEL from Front:

After calling your dog to the front of your body; Use a lure (treat in your hand) to guide your dog back to the side of your body (the side that he normally walks on), as you do this take a step back to help show him what you are asking, and say “heel” (or whatever marker you use for the heel position) as your dog follows the lure to the desired position... take a step forward to ensure he will end up in the correct position next to your body. Mark & Reward!

WEEK 2

AROUND from Front:

Start with your dog to the front of your body. Use a lure (treat in your hand) to guide your dog around your body in the direction opposite of the side he walks on. You will need a treat in both hands for this exercise. Begin by luring your dog around your body as you take a step or two back, you will say “fido around”. When your dog reaches the back side of your body you will then switch hands and begin luring the dog with the opposite hand at the same time take a step forward to ensure he will end up in the correct position next to your body. When your dog reaches the correct position next to your body Mark & Reward!

HANDLER PIVOT:

This exercise is used to further expand your dogs understanding of his position in relation to your body, as well as reinforcing the stay in place and dog positions. When working on “body positions” simply insert a handler pivot as desired. For example: If dog is in front position, give the cue to “stay” and pivot your own body into heel position so that you are facing the same direction as the dog. If dog is in heel position, give the cue to “stay” and take a step out in front of your dog so that you are facing him. Mix pivots in with regular body positions, this will

STEP: (Targeting with the front paws to an object)

Preliminary targeting work with touch pads. This exercise is intended to teach your dog to use his front feet to step on a target. This is groundwork for teaching the PLACE command. To start this exercise, walk your dog to the target you have chosen, allow them to check it out so they are not afraid of it. Its best to use a soft, raised mat that has good contrast from the floor.

Exercise 1: Start 6’ from the mat. Walk or lure your dog to the mat, as you say “step” lure your dog across the mat so that they have to step on it. As you see a paw touch the mat, MARK (YES!) & reward the event.

Exercise 2: Preload the mat by laying a treat on it so your dog can see it. Back away from the mat to a 6’ distance. Then point at the treat, and say “STEP” as you release your dog to go to the mat. When you see a paw touch the mat, MARK (YES!) & reward the event.

Repeat the process by backing away and walking your dog to the mat or sending your dog to a preloaded mat. It is important that your dog learn how to walk himself to the mat and touch it.

WATCH ME:

Creating engagement with the handler using eye contact. Start with dog in any position. Dogs can be allowed to move around at will. Call your dogs name and if he makes eye contact with you, 'MARK & REWARD' the event. Be sure to hide your treat hand behind your back or your dog will be tempted to look at the food rather than your face. As your dog begins to get the hang of the activity, you can add the cue "watch me" or whatever you want to use. Remember that eye contact is a stressful event for dogs. They normally divert their eyes to show respect. That being said, they can learn that eye contact with a human handler is a pleasant event. When practicing this cue, be sure you have a pleasant and encouraging look on your face. We don't want dogs to become stressed by the look we are giving them.

BACK-UP:

This exercise used to teach your dog to move in reverse on cue and independently when needed.

Exercise 1: Start with your dog in front standing position. Use a lure in front of your dog's muzzle or just under the muzzle. Push the lure toward the dogs chest as you say "BACK". As soon as you see your dog take even one step backward, MARK (YES!) & reward the event.

If your dog sits or downs when you begin to push the lure, simply rise or lower the lure to keep your dog in a standing position. Do NOT say NO if your dog makes a mistake. Simply try it again.

Exercise 2: Start with your dog in "HEEL" position. Its best to use a wall or barrier of some sort on the side next to the dog. This will help him learn to back up straight. Use a lure in front of your dog's muzzle or just under the muzzle. Push the lure toward the dogs chest as you say "BACK". As soon as you see your dog take even one step backward, MARK (YES!) & reward the event.

WEEK 3

TOUCH: *(targeting with the nose to the palm of the hand)*

This exercise is intended to teach your dog how to target with his nose. To touch his nose to the palm of your hand.

Tuck a food reward under your thumb and let your dog sniff the treat. Drag your hand away from the dogs muzzle slowly. As the dog begins to follow your hand, stop abruptly and cue the dog saying "TOUCH" when the dogs nose touches your hand, MARK (YES!) & reward by moving your thumb and allowing the dog to take the treat from your hand.

Use the same hand in the same position initially, then you can begin to use your other hand and alternate the position. You can also add touch objects other than your hand when your dog becomes more skilled at the exercise.

CAPPING: (the term capping is used for exercises that are used to teach a dog to stop one desirable action and do another, possibly less desirable action.) This exercise is used to help your dog stop something they enjoy and come to you or leave it alone. We will practice this exercise with both the “LEAVE-IT” and “COME” cues.

Spread out a hand full of tiny treats on the ground. Give your dog the cue you use to allow them to take food from the ground. I use “Find-it” or “OK”. Once your dog has begun eating the treats on the ground, call the dog’s name give the cue “LEAVE-IT” or “COME”. Be very clear when giving your cue, only give the cue one time. If your dog does not respond, give a light tap on the leash. The second your dog complies, ‘MARK (YES!) & reward.

You can alternate which cue you give on this exercise, as your dog should already be fluent in both. Also be random as to when you give the cue, as dogs are masters at seeing a pattern and anticipating what is next. Start this exercise indoors in an environment that has no distractions, and gradually work toward more distractions and more space between you and your dog.

HEEL OPPOSITE SIDE:

This exercise is intended to teach your dog to walk comfortably on the opposite side of your body from heel. Start with your dog in heel position. As you are walking, slowly (or you can stop) call your dog to the other side of your body using a lure and giving the cue. Use the same luring technique used to teach your dog the FRONT, AROUND, and Back to HEEL.

Remember, your dog will not be fluent at walking on the other side. You may have to use more rewards as well as verbal feedback (good walk) in order to let your dog know that he is doing the right thing. It will feel wrong to your dog so they may try to go back to the heel position to continue walking.

WEEK 4

STOP ON RECALL:

This exercise is intended to teach your dog to “stop & stay” instantly after being called to you. Start with dog in a stay in front of you, back up to about 4 feet. Give your dog the cue to come to you, when your dog is about halfway to you, lean toward him, hold out your flat hand and say “stay”. As soon as your dog stops moving “mark & reward”. The mark belongs at the second the behavior occurs, not when the dog completes the recall.

STOP IN HEEL:

This exercise is virtually the same as the stop on recall except it is done in heel position. Start walking with dog in heel position, when ready, pause, give the STAY cue. When your dogs stops at your side, mark and reward. Gradually work toward being able to continue walking while dog stops in one fluid action.

CONTINUING WORK:

Remember that all skills that your dog has learned should be incorporated into their training.

- **Sit & Down:** Incorporate these into sequences of activities but only mark and reward the new cue.
- **Stay:** Continue to increase distance, duration and distractions as your dog is successful with this exercise. Remember that when you change environments to a more distraction rich environment you must go back to level one of this exercise. That means we stay closer, keep it shorter, and add distractions gradually.
- **Heel:** Dogs shoulder in line with your knee is heel position. Dogs should be practicing where the heel position is, how to get there from various positions, and how to move in heel.
- **Loose Leash Walking:** Allowing your dog some space to maneuver around you online but NOT pulling on the leash. When the end of the line (no matter how long or short) the dog should stop there.
- **Leave-It:** Continue to increase the difficulty level of the exercise, adding distractions and new environmental stimuli. Add distance between you and your dog so your dog learns to comply with the cue “leave it” even when he is at a distance from the handler.