



## Sit/Stay/Free

What is the picture of Sit? Put your booty and all four feet on the ground and stay there, until I tell you otherwise.

What is the picture of Free? Your job is over!

### Sit = Please

Everyone wants their pet dog to have nice manners. Just as we would teach children to say “please” for what they want, we can also easily teach our dogs to ask nicely for life rewards. What are your dog’s life rewards? There are so many! Treats, food bowl, toys, playing tug or fetch, putting on the leash, cuddling on the couch, walking out the front door, going for a car ride, attention from people, etc, etc! Many times, our dog learns to train us to get what he wants by demanding it. Just like a child may scream, cry, or throw a tantrum, a dog may exhibit the same kind of behaviors by barking and whining, JUMPING on people (see the HYPER Dog blueprint), pawing, or scratching. All of the training done at BIDT revolves around this simple rule: **If your dog is doing something you don’t want him to do, TEACH him what you want him to do instead!** Redirecting behavior is the main reason we teach dogs basic obedience. However, it’s impossible to communicate and redirect behaviors unless we teach our dogs the specific behaviors and commands first. For whatever reason, many people assume that their dog was born knowing the English words “NO, Sit, and Come.” Therefore, owners spend no time teaching and spend much of their time getting frustrated and screaming “NO!” at their confused pooch. It’s just too silly for words.

Basically, the only reason dogs do any of the afore mentioned demanding behaviors is because it works; meaning it gets them what they want. In order to change that, we can teach them how to train us by simply offering a Sit. Offering a sit, is just like saying please. Teach your dog that so many life rewards are available to him if he just says please. Your dog should be telling all his pals what well trained humans he has. “Watch this! When I sit, they give me stuff!” Indeed, we do!

## Turn Sit into Your Dog's Default Behavior

We already know that dogs learn better with small, frequent intervals of training. Furthermore, if training your dog is not conducive to your everyday life, you are a lot less likely to practice. Therefore, begin asking your dog to sit for every single little life reward throughout the day. If you do this, you may easily practice the Sit = Please behavior 30 to 50 times in one day! Before you know it, your dog will be offering a Sit (saying please) without you even asking for it. Voila! Your dog has successfully trained you and Sit has become his default behavior.

Remember, any crazy, hyper, cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs dog, becomes an angel when he is sitting. Anytime you catch yourself wanting to say "No!" to your dog, communicate more clearly and ask him to SIT instead. Suddenly, you will find yourself practicing the magic ratio and saying "YES" five more times than you say "NO." It is infinitely easier to teach a dog by communicating what you DO want, rather than constantly telling him what you DON'T want.

## Teaching Fido to Sit

Hold a food treat right in front of your dog's nose, and move the lure upwards and backwards just above the dog's muzzle. Often it helps to hold the treat like a magnet to the dog's nose with just a slight bit of pressure. Typically, as his head moves up, following the food, his booty will naturally hit the floor. If your dog jumps up, you are holding the treat too high. If your dog backs up, work with the dog in a corner.

*Getting your dog fluent in the behavior first is more important than the words. Of course, when you begin this exercise, your dog has no idea what the English word "Sit" means. You might as well be speaking to him in Swahili or Japanese. Consequently, there is no reason to even to begin using the word until your dog is about 80% fluent in the behavior. Once your dog begins to anticipate the behavior, you can assume he is at least 80% fluent in the behavior and you can begin using the word, "sit". With repetition and practice, your dog will eventually learn that the word "sit" is associated with the behavior of putting his booty on the ground.*

Until you are 100% sure that your dog is fluent in the actual word "sit," only give the command once and continue with the lure (which transitions into the hand signal of lifting your hand, palm up). Do not say the command over and over again a hundred times while pointing at their butt and for heaven's sake, don't scream it!

Imagine if while in class, I asked you in Japanese to sit in a chair. Then, when you didn't do it, I started saying the same Japanese request over and over again, getting frustrated, raising my voice, and pointing at your butt. Would that make you understand me any quicker? Again, too silly for words.

*NOTE I:* Remember! In the initial stages, we are not working on the stay aspect. In the beginning, all we want is for Fido to put his booty all the way down on the ground and then we should *release* him immediately.

*NOTE II:* Remember! The command for putting a booty on the floor is "Sit", it is **not** "Sit Down." The word "Down" means put all four feet and your belly on the ground, and should not be used for any other request, including jumping up or counter surfing.

## Stay and Free

To communicate effectively with our dogs, it is important to not only verbalize when we want them to begin a job, but we must also let them know when the job is over. When we say “sit” to our dogs, we do not mean for them to touch their booty to the floor until they have gotten a treat and then get up and jump around like hyenas. When we tell our dogs to sit, we want them to sit until we release them, not until another dog walks by, or until the ants in their pants become too agitated to ignore. **Sit means “sit and stay until I tell you otherwise.” Therefore, “Stay” is implied. There is no need to say the word.** Our preferred release command to let Fido know when his job is over is “FREE!” We have heard lots of different release words from “Action!” to “Hot Damn!” By all means, we encourage you to get creative with your release word, but you must be 100% consistent with whatever you use. The only release word we discourage is “OK.” Most of us use “OK” too frequently in our everyday language for it to be an effective release word.

Also, your release command should be an exciting reward for your dog. Most of us get pretty excited when our job is over! Say “FREEEE” with enthusiasm and make it active. Always direct his release upward and towards you to reinforce the attention you are trying to establish. The release command is to let your dog know he is done working for the time being and he is free to go do as he pleases. You will use your release word with most of your basic commands: sit, down, place, while walking on leash, etc.

NOTE: Any command can break a command. For instance, if you are walking Fido and you ask him to sit at the curb, you needn’t say “Free” when you are ready to begin walking again. You will simply say “With Me” or whatever your walking command may be. In other words, you may transition directly into another job.

## A Few Things Sit Does Not Mean

Bark, whine, growl, scoot, scratch, sniff, or lick. Also implied in our sit command is silence. Fido may take on the attitude that if he can’t go up and sniff something up close, he will bark at it from afar. If he is barking, or doing the hoochie skoochie (shuffling around or scooting forward), or he is a butt popper upper, you will repeat the command and guide him to sit again. It’s as if you are saying, “No, not like that, like this!” Picture a dog sitting very still and quiet. This is a sit. Any deviation from this picture constitutes breaking the sit and you will need to tell your dog to please cease any artistic interpretation of the exercise. It is very important that everything be made black and white for your dog so he will be clear on which behaviors are acceptable and which are not.

## Teaching that Sit (or Down) also means Stay

The next step is to begin working on the “stay.” Begin by asking very little of your dog and slowly build on the 3 D’s: *duration, distraction, and distance.*

To begin teaching your dog the stay aspect, you must begin to change his picture of sit very slowly. Up to this point, you have probably only practiced the sit command by standing directly in front of your dog. We must now teach him that no matter where your body goes, he is to

remain in a sit position until told otherwise.

Our first goal is to be able to walk a circle around the dog. Once you have accomplished walking a full circle around Fido, you can then proceed to add distance and distractions. During the following exercise, never take your eyes off your dog. If he begins to break his sit, you must immediately help guide him back into position.

1. Ask Fido to sit or down and attempt a right pivot. In other words, take a small step with your right foot and turn your body so you are facing the same way as Fido; your right leg next to the left side of his body. Treat the success.
2. Repeat the Command (“Sit” or “Down”) and then go back to your original picture of standing directly in front of him. You are repeating the command (once!) as a way of reminding him that even though, something is about to change, he is still doing a job. Release (FREE!) and repeat the right pivot exercise until your dog has succeeded at least 5 times in a row.
3. Do the exact same exercise with a left pivot.
4. Go back to the right side and begin to widen the pivot into a large half circle. Take baby steps!
5. Once your dog is a master with the wide right-side pivot, do the same with the left side.
6. Attempt to walk a full circle around Fido. Do NOT move too fast! If Fido begins failing often, take it back a couple of steps and let him succeed!

Remember the *First Noble Truth of Dog Training*: **Timing**. Watch constantly so that your guidance will be timely and your dog will know what you’re trying to communicate with him. Just like you must mark the exact moment he does it right, you must also immediately mark the moment when he breaks his sit. Not only must you watch constantly, but you should also communicate constantly with verbal feedback. Tell them when they are doing it right! Unfortunately, too many of us concentrate on the negative feedback and give very little positive feedback. It is SO much easier to teach a dog (or any living, learning being, for that matter) by telling him what it is you DO want, rather than always concentrating on what it is you DON’T want. Use the 5:1 Magic Ratio!

In addition, observe the *Second Noble Truth of Dog Training*: **Consistency**. If you let Fido break one sit after another without correction, you can never expect him to understand what you want. Does sit really mean sit and stay? How will he know unless you are consistent? Until Fido is performing very well, do not risk compromising your consistency or timing by walking far away or going out of sight during this exercise.

We must slowly teach our dogs to sit and remain sitting in many different environmental contexts. Generalization ideas for the Sit:

- Clap your hands and stomp your feet while still holding the leash.
- Drop the leash on the floor.
- Get down on your knees six feet away.
- Walk further and further away (be careful of making timing and consistency errors). Don’t get too cocky too soon.

- Have your friends walk by Fido (closer and closer).
- Have a friend pet him while he is in a sit (make sure you start by being right next to him).
- Walk other dogs by him.
- Throw a ball near him, or set down a piece of food in front of him.
- Hype Up- Settle Down. Play with your dog. When he starts to get really excited, have him sit. Then release him and repeat.
- Don't forget to keep it fun and build on success.

Are you getting the idea of generalization? Good. Generalization is the key to having a dog whose obedience is a useful part of your life rather than just a bunch of parlor tricks. The world is rarely without distraction; train your dog so he is prepared.