

“WAIT” VERSUS “STAY”

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Training Tip Tuesday: “Wait” versus “Stay” and the importance of a formal Release word!

I talk a lot about building relationships based on communication. To that end, I want my efforts to communicate to be crystal clear. “Wait” vs “Stay” is one of those instances that can get very muddy very quickly when we are trying to teach our dogs. Many people use “Stay” to mean all kinds of things. Sometimes we want the dog to “Stay” in a particular position and not move. Sometimes we say “Stay” and it’s perfectly okay for the dog to decide when he’s done and get up and move around (When you leave the house, do you tell your dog to ‘Stay’ ? Do you really expect him to be in the same position he was when you left him when you get home?)

I generally try to avoid using lots of different cues for actions and positions that are really the same thing; but in this case – I feel that “Wait” and “Stay” are two very different things!

“Wait” means ‘just hold on a sec’ or ‘standby’ or ‘settle over there for a minute while I get in position to ask you to do something’ – it’s a temporary position that you are okay with the dog breaking to either respond to you or the environment.

“Stay” means ‘Do not, under any circumstances, move an inch until I come back and formally release you.’ They should hold their exact position, in that exact spot, until you return to them. (This can be hard for many dogs, which is why we generally do not use “Stay” for very long durations)

If your dog is used to hearing “Stay” all the time – he will make the choice when it’s okay for him to move instead of waiting for you to tell him. If he thinks he heard you call him, or something else caught his attention – nothing in his experience is going to tell him ‘no – not yet, you have to wait for mom’.

So when you are teaching your dog – think about what you really want him to do. Is it okay for him to get up and leave the position he was in? Use “Wait”. Is it crucial he holds a position until you return to him and release him? Use “Stay!”

For Example -

If I’m working on recalls and I’m going to set my dog up, walk across the room, and call him to me – I use wait.

If I’m leaving my dog in a position to step out of sight and I need to make sure he will still be there when I come back, I use “Stay!”

When I leave the house, I tell my dogs ‘hang out guys – I’ll be back soon’

And, of course, no dialogue on “Stay” would be complete without also discussing a formal release word. You should have a cue to let your dog know he’s done for the moment, that he can

get up, move about and take a break. Try to avoid words the dog hears all the time (Like Okay! – as humans we use that word in conversation often!) Common ones are “All Done!”, “Free!” or “Release!” One of my favorites is “No mas!”. Pick something that works for you and practice it. Ask your dog to sit, then toss a treat as you say your release word. Your dog should jump up to get the treat. Practice this a few times, then say your release word and see if your dog hops up. If he does – reward him! If not, practice a few more times.

** Since so many of you have challenged us to the Mannequin Challenge – here ya go. Watch the scene and comment; Do you think I used ‘Wait’ or ‘Stay’ in this scene? Any other cues you think I used to get this scene? (Hint: They are both ignoring the pile of milk-bones on the table, and Kod is doing a formal hold with a bacon flavored pork roll for his cigar...Dais had 3 cues, Kod had 4)

And for all you eager folk – try a pose with your own dog and post the video. See if you can get your dog to freeze in a position for 10 seconds! Have fun and be safe!

<https://youtu.be/OIOar2ZxLOI>