

Sit

There are three basic steps when teaching your puppy this cue:

1. **Lure.** Put a treat just above the puppy's nose and move the treat slowly up over his head so he will need to look up to follow the treat. When most puppies' noses go up, their rears go down into the *sit* position, which is exactly what you want.
2. **Mark.** The second your puppy's rear hits the floor, say a word such as "yes" or give a click from a clicker to **mark the behaviour** (rear on floor). This lets your puppy know that was the behaviour you wanted.
3. **Reward.** Give your puppy a tasty treat, but make sure he receives it while his rear is still on the floor or you will be rewarding the wrong behaviour. The correct position is rear on floor to receive his reward. A reward reinforces the behaviour the puppy gave you; in this case, it is the *sit*.

Once your puppy is consistent at sitting promptly every time you give him the command and show him the lure, change the lure into a reward. This can be accomplished by *moving your hands the same way, but without any treats in them*. Add the verbal cue "sit" at the same time you are moving your hand over his head. The second his rear hits the floor, mark and reward him quickly. With a little time and practice, you can stop using your hands entirely and merely give the cue "sit."

It is very important to change the lure at the beginning into a reward only for completing the behaviour, or your puppy will listen to you only when he sees a treat. The first time he sits without you showing him a treat, jackpot him for a good job. Instead of just one treat, **a jackpot will be four or five tiny treats in a row**. This will let him know he did a great job.

The finished behaviour has three basic steps: cue, mark, and reward.

1. **Cue.** Say the cue "sit."
2. **Mark.** The moment the puppy's rear hits the floor, offer a "yes" or a click.
3. **Reward.** Give the puppy a treat to reinforce the *sit* behaviour he just gave you.

Helping Your Puppy Generalise the Cue

If you are teaching your puppy to sit in front of you, start asking for the *sit* at your side. You are asking for a new behaviour, as dogs do not generalise well. When you teach your puppy to sit at your side, train the same way you did when asking for the *sit* when he was in front of you.

Once he is consistent in front of you and at your side, it is time to introduce new environments, such as a different room, then outside, then from across the room, and so forth. Each step takes time. You can also begin to add other places, being given the cue by different people, and adding distractions. Now he will understand that *sit* means put rear on floor.

Many new puppy parents think their puppies are stubborn, hard-headed, or have selective hearing because they will not *sit* when they ask for the cue. In many cases, however, it is because the puppy parent did not teach the puppy the cue in many places or with distractions. Another reason that some puppies do not *sit* on cue is because they were habituated to the cue *sit*. This can happen when puppy parents repeat the cue more than once by saying “sit, sit, sit.” Repeating a cue habituates the puppy to the cue. If you must repeat the cue, take a step to the right or left first, get your puppy’s attention, and then repeat the cue once.

Troubleshooting *Sit*

Some puppies resist the above method by backing up. You can address this resistance in several ways. You can ask for the cue in a corner so that the puppy is restricted as to how far he can back up, or you can try asking for the *sit* on a different surface. For some puppies, you can use a rug or pillow as a different texture to sit on. This can make a difference when the cue is first being taught. Once the puppy is consistently sitting on the special surface, you can train him in new places on different surfaces.

If you find that your puppy seems to be resisting the cue *sit*, do not push or force his rear down to the floor. There may be a medical reason for this resistance. Instead, contact our practice and set up an appointment for a complete examination.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us