



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department

Paw Pad Game #3 – Stand and Sit

See video Paw Pad Game #3 <https://youtu.be/k5huxHULJZo>

**Addendum: Luring with prompts on the Paw Pad https://youtu.be/T2dK_yzCX0U

Goal Behavior

The puppy will go from a stand position to a sit position and vice versa, with the front feet on the Paw Pad, when cued by a signal from the handler. The verbal cues for stand and sit will be introduced once the dog is reliably responding (fluent) on the signal cues. Duration (stay) will also be attained in both positions.

Note: The correct way to introduce verbal cues is explained in this document. If the raiser adds the verbal cues sooner, that is OK, but the puppy probably will not focus on the verbal cue due to the lure/signal “blocking” the verbal cue. Dogs respond much more easily to visual cues (signals) than verbal cues. The eventual goal is that the puppy responds to a verbal cue alone and no longer needs to be given a signal to attain a position. See the section below “Introduction of Verbal Cues for the Foundation Positions” for more details.

Prerequisites

- The puppy should be well practiced on Paw Pad Game #2. The puppy should be comfortable holding a stand position on the Paw Pad for at least ten seconds, between rewards, with the handler moving in and out of position
- The puppy should be familiar with the sit signal as in the document Introducing the Foundation Position “Sit”

Once the puppy is following the lure/signal into the sit position, the raiser should start the Paw Pad games in this document. If the handler continues only rewarding the puppy for sitting somewhere in front of the handler, the pup will form a habit of swinging in front when asked to sit. The previous games magnetizing the puppy to the Paw Pad in “heel” position will now make it easy to transition the pup to sitting at the handler’s side. Continuing to focus on Paw Pad games will reinforce heel position and will also make introduction of the “stay” cue very simple.

The raiser should be acquainted with the signal for “stand”. The stand signal is the right hand held horizontally with fingers together pointing to the puppy’s left.



Here is a link to a video of the signals for sit, stand and down. Focus on the sit and stand signals for now: <https://youtu.be/FJJvksyVfFA>

Session Set up

- A suitable Paw Pad should be set up in a quiet area. At this time a shorter Paw Pad is recommended. *Too tall a pad will make it difficult for the puppy to sit.*
- The training is preferably done off-leash in an area that is safe with no distractions. If the leash is attached, it should be loose and stepped upon so that the handler's hands are free. The leash should not be used to guide the puppy.
- The bait bag will be most accessible if worn in the small of the handler's back; this allows for feeding with both hands.
- Some puppies may still need a wall on the outside to help keep the pup straight. The pad should not be so close to the wall that the puppy leans on the wall. Some other type of barrier can be used such as a grill/section of x-pen to help keep the pup in position.
- The handler should stand facing forward with the Paw Pad on the left, positioned so that the front edge is approximately at the midline of the foot and touching or nearly touching the handler's foot. This will place the puppy with its front legs level with the seam of the handler's pants; the pup's ears should be about level with the handler's leg when on the pad, i.e. in "heel position."

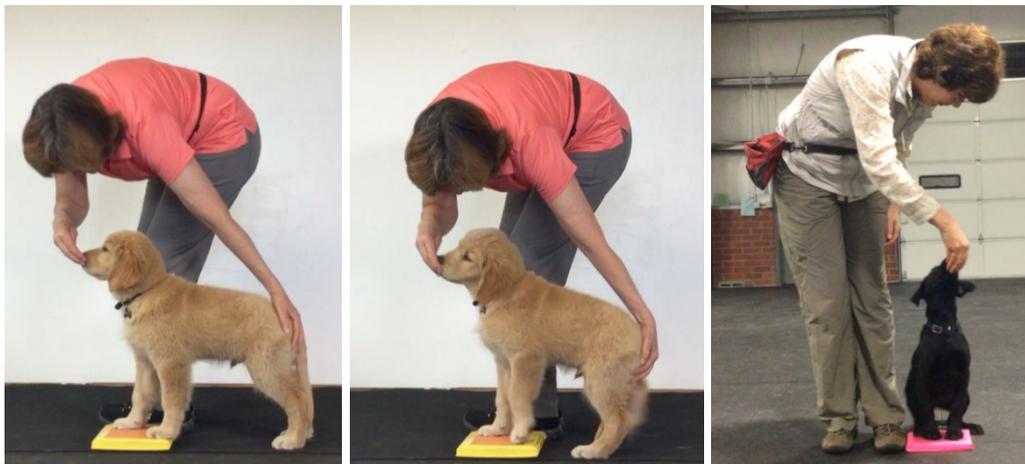
Reminder

The difference between a lure and a signal is that a lure is hand-held food and a true signal is given with a hand motion that contains no food. This document will help raisers smoothly transition from luring to signaling. The mark "Nice" is not given when a behavior is lured. Once there is no hand-held food being used as a lure, and the signal is pure, the puppy will be marked and rewarded.

Steps

Sit on the Paw Pad (https://youtu.be/T2dK_yzCX0U)

- The puppy should be rewarded once for standing on the Paw Pad as in "Paw Pad Game #2" with the raiser at the pup's side.
- The raiser should give the sit signal with a piece of kibble held under the thumb. Because we are asking the puppy to sit in a different position in relation to the handler than when we introduced the sit, the raiser can continue to use a lure (food in the signal hand) for the first couple of sessions.
- If the puppy is hesitant or tries to back off the pad to sit, the raiser can remind the puppy how to tuck into a sit by placing the left hand on the pup's rear while maintaining the lure with the right hand as in "Introducing the Sit". This light physical prompt should not be needed more than a few times.



- Once the puppy sits it should be given several pieces of kibble in quick succession. It may be necessary for the raiser to hold a stash of several kibbles in the left hand, held behind the raiser's back, to reward the puppy without having to reach into the bait bag. Often, when first learning a position, the pup may not be able to hold still long enough for the raiser to reach into the bag to obtain food.
- The pup should be asked to hold the position for five to ten seconds duration with continuous reinforcement (multiple rewards in quick succession) for holding the position. If duration is not heavily reinforced, the pup will constantly offer changes of position to earn rewards. It must learn to hold the position until cued to change position.
- The puppy that changes position without being cued to do so should not receive a reward for that behavior.

Troubleshooting

If the puppy is reluctant to sit, the height of the Paw Pad should be checked; also, too wide a pad may cause the puppy difficulty in changing positions.

Introducing the Signal for Stand

The puppy will very quickly understand the signal for stand due to all the work done on the previous Paw Pad games!

- With the puppy sitting with its two front feet on the Paw Pad, the raiser should give the stand signal with a piece of kibble tucked under the thumb, held across the palm. The hand should be held horizontal with fingers together pointing to the puppy's left.



- The signal is given at the pup's nose level. The kibble is released to the puppy's mouth as soon as it stands up.
- If the puppy is reluctant to stand, the lure should be held on the puppy's nose and slowly drawn forward to encourage the puppy to follow the lure. The left hand may be placed, palm down, underneath the puppy just in front of the stifle and the puppy very gently helped into a stand. The touch is more on the stifle (front of the hind leg) rather than the pup's sensitive belly area.



- Once the puppy is standing it can be rewarded intermittently with single kibbles from the bait bag with either hand, although left hand rewarding promotes better positioning in relation to the handler.
- The pup should not be asked to sit again immediately but rather rewarded for duration on the stand, as in Paw Pad Games #1 and #2. If duration is not heavily reinforced, the pup will constantly offer changes of position to earn rewards. It must learn to hold the position until cued to change position.
- The puppy that changes position without being cued to do so should not receive a reward for that behavior.

Troubleshooting

If the puppy sits again immediately, without being cued, it should be lured back into a stand with the signal/lure and very quickly rewarded with multiple kibbles from a stash held in the left hand. The amount of time between rewards may have to be increased slowly if the pup loses interest or offers changes of position without being cued.

The Importance of Rewarding Duration (Staying Still)

On both foundation positions, stand and sit, the pup must be well reinforced for holding position (staying) to prevent the puppy from constantly moving/offering changes of position. The raiser should always give multiple rewards in one position before asking for a change of position. The rate of reinforcement (timing of rewards) is crucial – waiting too long between rewards when the pup is not ready for it will result in unwanted movement. However, a continuous rate of reinforcement will not teach the puppy to wait for rewards; the time between rewards for holding the position must be gradually and thoughtfully increased. Some puppies will be better at holding the stand and rewards can be offered more intermittently. Some pups will prefer a sit position and the raiser will need to focus more on reinforcing the stand position. It is a balance to keep the puppy motivated to hold both positions! The majority of puppies will need more practice at holding a stand than a sit.

It cannot be stressed enough how important duration is when playing these games with the puppy. The puppy not anticipating a position change puts the cue under stimulus control and is the first step in teaching stay in a positive manner.

The Lure Becomes an Actual Signal

- When the pup is readily responding to the lure for a position it is time to start weaning the puppy off the hand-held food. This should happen within ten to twenty sessions of the lure/signal being introduced for most puppies.

- To avoid confusing the puppy, care should be taken that the shape of the hand signal is exactly the same when transitioning from the lure/signal to a pure signal.
- After a couple of lure/signals the raiser should give the pup a signal (no food in the signal hand) for the position, mark as soon as the puppy responds and reward with a kibble held in the other hand. For the first few times the signal is given it is best to have food ready in the left hand, held behind the handler's back, to facilitate a quick reward. Otherwise, when the handler marks, the puppy might change position while the handler is reaching for the food in the bait bag. This stash of food in the non-signal hand is usually only necessary for the first few repetitions; subsequently the raiser can go to marking then reaching into the bag for reward.
- Sometimes it helps to alternate between luring and signaling. For example, the handler would lure five times then give a signal, being careful to keep the hand exactly the same shape whether food is held or not. Then the handler might lure three times then signal and so on.
- When the puppy responds to a signal, not a lure, it should be marked with "Nice!"

Troubleshooting

If the puppy refuses to change position without the hand-held kibble i.e. a lure, the handler should withhold food and turn their attention to the ceiling for five seconds (see "time outs" below) then try again. The puppy will see the time out as a lost opportunity to earn reward. The signal should be tried again and if the puppy still refuses, the handler should end the session. The next session should start with luring for ten repetitions before trying the signal again. When the puppy performs on a signal, a jackpot (multiple pieces of food given at once) may be given.

More on Duration for Puppies That Anticipate Position Changes

Once the pup is in the desired position, it should be fed single pieces of kibble from either hand to reward it for holding position. If the pup is either losing interest in the game, or attempts to change position before being cued, the food delivery should be sped up. It may be necessary to get the rewards to the pup really quickly at first, before it thinks about getting out of position. The raiser rummaging in the bait bag a split second too long may cause the pup to break position. At this point in the game, it's acceptable for the handler to hold a stash of food in one hand so that a kibble can quickly be given to the pup with either hand.

Negative Punishment – Time Outs

Once the puppy has had many sessions of being positively reinforced for holding the cued position on the Paw Pad, negative punishment may be applied if the puppy changes position without being cued to do so. Negative punishment is withholding something that the puppy wants – in this case, food and handler attention. *Time outs will not work with puppies that do not have a history of positive reinforcement on the Paw Pad so cannot be applied earlier in the learning process.*

- If the puppy offers a position change without being cued to do so the handler should immediately look away from the puppy and become very still and quiet, like a post. The time out should last five to ten seconds. If it is safe to do so the handler can even walk a few steps away from the puppy and Paw Pad.
- When resuming the game the handler should make sure the puppy is successful even if it means going back a few steps in the game.

Duration – The Three "Ds" or How to Positively Teach a Stay

Three elements need to be considered when teaching a pup to stay; only one element should be added at a time. When one element is increased in difficulty the other elements should be made easier:

- **Duration** – the amount of *time* that the puppy is asked to hold the position. This should be built up gradually. A few seconds is a long time for a baby puppy to hold a position!
- **Distraction** – this could mean handler movement or outside distractions. Handler movement should be worked on first. Initially this may mean just standing up from a crouch or a step to one side then quickly back to the pup to reward. Then perhaps a little jiggle in place ... If the pup moves the handler should start again and make it easier for the puppy. Other distractions (such

as people, dogs, blowing leaves) should be very minor and a long way from the puppy to begin with. Distractions should be introduced carefully and slowly to allow the pup to be successful.

- **Distance** - When adding *distance* away from the puppy, the *time* the puppy is expected to maintain the position should be decreased. Distance between the pup and handler should be increased a half step at a time. If the puppy moves the handler needs to stay closer.

Adding too much difficulty at once would be unfair to the puppy, undermining its success and chance to earn positive reinforcement. Building up the stays slowly with lots of rewards will result in a happy, reliable puppy!

Introducing the Verbal Cue “Stay”

On the positions where the puppy has excellent duration i.e. the pup will hold position for at least twenty seconds between rewards and the handler can move six to ten feet away, the raiser should now start giving the verbal cue “stay” before leaving the puppy. The cue should be given quietly and matter-of-factly so as not to startle or confuse the puppy. The puppy may be ready for a stay cue after just a few weeks of work on a position, or it may take longer. Only when the raiser is really sure that the puppy will hold its position, should the stay cue be given.

Note: We are not going to introduce a *signal* for stay. Introducing a signal for stay has the potential to be very confusing for the puppy as signals up to now have been associated with movement. A verbal cue for stay is sufficient.

Introduction of Verbal Cues for the Foundation Positions

Now verbal cues can be given just before the hand signal on the foundation positions the puppy is fluent in. When teaching a verbal cue, it is given *before* the signal, not at the same time. If the verbal cue is given at the same time as the signal, the puppy will not pay attention to the verbal cue as dogs are so much more aware of body language (signals), than the human speaking voice.

“Sit” as an example:

- The handler says “sit”, *and then* gives the signal to sit; the puppy sits, is marked and rewarded.
- After ten sessions of ten repetitions each of the above, the handler says “sit” *without* giving a signal; the puppy will probably sit and should be marked and rewarded.

The same procedure can be followed for teaching verbal cues for “stand” and “down”.

Troubleshooting

- *If the puppy is not responding to the verbal cue after ten sessions of work on the verbal cue as outlined above, the puppy should be given another five sessions or so of the raiser saying the cue before the hand signal.*
- *Should the puppy still not respond to the verbal cue without the signal, fading the signal is another option. Fading the signal means to very gradually (over multiple sessions) reduce the signal by making it smaller and smaller until it is just a finger flick then nothing at all.*

If the puppy is having difficulty on any parts of this game and the handler is unsure of why or how to continue, the leader should be consulted. Sometimes an observer can see why breakdowns in behavior are happening more easily than the handler can. Our goal is to keep puppy training positive for pups and handlers alike!