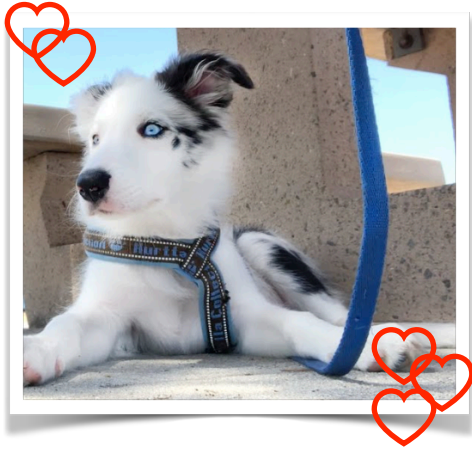


The Art of 'Being Still!' (a little different from 'Teaching Place')

If you have been in a public place, or stood still with your dog, you will notice they are often pacing, or pulling to get to an interesting smell, or barking at things going by, or generally just showing unsettled or anxious behaviors & body language. Training 'Being Still' helps your dog to simply take in the environment, quietly, while he just relaxes.

The 'art of doing nothing' or 'being still', or 'hanging out' is a behavior that has to be taught. No whining, no nudging you, no barking, no movement or pacing, no pulling, no mouthing his leash, etc.



To lay the foundation for this training, 'capture' the behavior of calmness! When your dog is napping or just hanging out' with you, walk by, say a calm & quiet, 'good boy', place a treat on the floor, between his paws (so he doesn't get up & you are putting the reinforcement where you want the behavior to be, right?). In the beginning your dog may pop up, expecting more treats, but just ignore your dog (or say, 'all done'). He will come to learn that the reinforcement came for calm & relaxation. It may seem counter-intuitive to "interrupt" the peaceful moment with a treat, but placed down calmly & quietly, a treat can reward his calmness and not let that wonderful behavior simply go ignored! It's called 'capturing'. And remember...rewarded behavior is likely to be repeated!

HINT: carry lower value treats on you at all times (like his kibble), or have containers of treats around your home, or snap on your treat bag at random times throughout the day, so your dog is desensitized to treats being on your person, & learns he gets them only for relaxation.

NOTE: like any training, as you begin this training for 'being still', start in a quiet indoor area such as a bathroom or bedroom. Indoor spaces are boring, quiet and usually free of distractions. You can then slowly work in more distracting spaces, like the living room, or kitchen, or on your back deck, then perhaps in your driveway, then go to work in busy parking lots (stay safely on the perimeter of busy parking lots!), public parks, or dog parks, etc.

Note #2: giving treats frequently can keep your dog aroused & anticipating, versus simply 'doing nothing'. So, 'Be Still' training doesn't use lots of treats to 'lure' your dog, and you will eventually ONLY reinforce a DOWN, and will be placing the treat between his paws, slowly & calmly, to reinforce the relaxed, still behavior. Fade treats quickly.

Your marker for this should be a calm, more quiet verbal cue, reflecting the calm & quiet behavior you are training.

To teach your dog the 'art of being still': (dog on leash, of course! No cues - the cue is you being 'still')

- 1.) Position yourself and your dog in the space, & gather his leash in your hand so he has only 2'-3' leeway to move.
- 2.) Now, simply stand or sit STILL yourself. Just wait, stare off into space, and 'be still'.
- 3.) Ignore everything the dog does. Whining, barking, jumping, pacing - just shorten the leash a bit until he stops, then relax again, letting the leash out to a 2-3' length once again.
- 4.) BE PATIENT, yes BE PATIENT, and again, BE PATIENT! REMEMBER: Ignore any & all protests!
- 5.) When your dog sits, (the 1st behavior in shaping the 'be still' down), quietly place a treat between his front feet.
- 6.) Now, delay your treat until your dog offers a DOWN, then lean over and quietly drop 4-5 more treats between his front feet one at a time – as soon as he opens his mouth to get one treat, drop another. Then return to your own 'quiet' position, seated or standing up.
- 7.) If he remains down, place another treat down quietly. Sit/Stand up again and count to 2 seconds before delivering the next treat. Then 3 seconds, 4 seconds, then back to 2 seconds, then up to 10 seconds, then back to 4 seconds and so on. If at any time he gets up to move around, just stay quiet, completely ignoring him, keeping his leash short. He'll eventually offer a 'down' again.
- 8.) Build up both his duration in this 'quiet' position, and his ability to hold the position with fewer & fewer treats, until he is truly able to 'be still' when you are.

Occasionally, practice the training randomly, and without treats: stand still, and let your dog come to be still with you. Move a few steps, and repeat. Your goal is simply to 'stop', 'be still' and your dog will do the same.

Once your dog knows the skill, you can add a cue: as your dog starts to 'be still' simply say your cue, 'Relax'. Reinforce when he is fully calm and relaxed. Of course, be sure to train in environments which are more & more distracting.

NOTE: of course, give a release word when you are ready to 'move on' and need your dog to 'break' a 'still' position.

(source: Kiko Pup, Glasgow Dog Trainer & Behaviorist, Susan Garrett)