

## Stop at the Door



Before we start teaching this life skill, I might need to unpick some old-fashioned advice.

When I began training classes with my first dog, we were told that the dog could not go out of the door ahead of us because we were encouraging dominance. Thankfully, we now know that the dominance theories are a myth and we can set about teaching our dogs what to do instead.

If dogs can stop and wait at a doorway or gate, you can go ahead and check that everything is safe. This may be especially helpful if you live near a busy road, have young children to manage, or dogs that need to be kept separate from each other.

This training may be useful if your dog has aggression issues at a door or gate.

We are going to teach this using the luring technique. Please watch this video to learn how to get started with luring [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_aSCyk7Ufu8&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_aSCyk7Ufu8&t=18s)

### Step 1 – Choose your food reward

We are going to teach the dogs to stop at the door or gate when we stop, therefore you need a piece of food that can be placed at your dog's feet, doesn't roll around and can be seen against your flooring. If your dog has any problems with vision, then pick a highly scented food.

### Step 2 – Collect the food and engage your dog

Most dogs are very aware of where the training food is kept, and will arrive at the fridge or cupboard before you, but if your dog is new to training you may have to employ some acting skills and become animated about collecting and preparing the food. Avoid looking at your dog as you do this, focus on the food instead, dogs are co-operative hunters and instinct will cause them to become interested in anything that interests you.

### Step 3 – use the lure to cue an action of 'follow'

This time place the food between your fingers, turn your palm upwards and invite your dog to follow. Keep your hand still, avoid moving it towards and away from your dog's mouth. Dogs read intention very well, they know which way you are planning to go, therefore, point your feet and turn your shoulders in the direction you are planning to travel. Look forwards if you can.

### **Step 4 – Deliver food**

Cue your dog to stop by slowing down and lifting your hand. As you stop, place the food on the floor and take a step forward. It is not essential for your dog to sit, but many pet dogs will interpret the lifted hand as a cue to sit, either sit or stand is fine, whichever your dog chooses.

If you have taught your dog to 'leave it' by placing food on the floor on then taking it away or covering it, if they move forward, then your dog may be apprehensive about taking the food without your permission. If this happens you can encourage the dog to take the food or try placing it in a container or on a different surface e.g. a mat.

If your goal is to be able to step out of a gate and then close the gate, you may find it helpful to progress the training by placing one piece of food and then scattering some more, this will give you time to get out of the gate and close it.

### **Step 5 – Fade the food**

Once your dog has the idea, make the same hand gestures, but this time there is no food in the hand. Keep the food in secure tub, out of reach, besides the door or gate, or you can carry the food in your spare hand.

Begin to add some verbal cues. In my video with the more experienced dog I say 'stop' and then ask the dog to 'wait', use whichever words your dog understands or suit you best.

To increase the amount of time the dog stays still, I deliver the food by tossing it back to him. If I want the dog to join me, I invite him to come forward and collect the food.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weSKMlilkeg>

### **What next?**

If you are struggling with any other aspects of your dog's behaviour then we are here to help. Please check out our website or social media for details of how to get in touch with us. Video consultations are now available, so distance is no longer a barrier to learning.

Have fun and enjoy your dogs

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