



The Heel

Exercises

Definition of Heel:

Your dog's front feet are parallel with your feet. The heel command communicates to your dog to follow your side and ignore distractions until released.

Warm Up - Figure 8's

1. With your dog on a short leash at your side, say their name, then cue "heel" and step off.
2. Take 5–10 steps forward before preparing to make a sharp turn.
3. Before you enter the turn, tug the leash lightly to get their attention and say "heel".
4. As you turn, use a gentle leash tug to help guide them.
5. As you exit your turn, verbally praise your dog ("good dog!") while keeping a short hold on the leash (avoid petting—save it for later).
6. Take another 5–10 steps forward before preparing to do another sharp turn with your dog at your side.
7. Try turning the opposite way you did last time (e.g., if you turned right, turn left this time).
8. Before you enter the turn, tug the leash to get their attention and say "heel".
9. As you turn, tug the leash to help steer them.
10. As you exit your turn, verbally praise your dog and take 5–10 steps before preparing to stop in heel.
11. Before you stop, say "heel", then tug the leash to slow your dog down and settle them.
12. Once your dog is in a settled state, mark with "yes" (duration marker) and pay in position.
13. Repeat or release your dog with "break."

Structured Walking

75% of your Walk

1. With your dog at your side (left or right) on a short leash, using a closed-hand grip, say your dog's name, then "heel" and begin walking.
 - a. **If your dog listens:** verbally praise (don't pet or reward — save that for when you stop walking).
 - b. **If your dog doesn't listen:** do not reinforce them. Tug the leash until the dog follows, and encourage them with your voice.
2. Cue your dog "heel" before you turn or approach a distraction, and repeat for about 75% of your walk. Give breaks every block or two.
3. When you are ready to release your dog from structured walking (the "heel" command), say "heel" before you stop walking.
 - a. **If your dog listens:** verbally praise and mark with "yes" (duration marker), then reward.
 - b. **If your dog doesn't listen:** do not reinforce with food. Tug the leash until your dog follows, stops, and settles. Encourage with your voice.
4. Once your dog is in a settled state, release them to go sniff by tapping them on the shoulder and saying "break" (release marker) at the same time.
5. Repeat step 1 when you are ready to end your dog's break time and resume walking.