



FREE

Level 1

Goal: We want to teach the dog to get out of position as soon as he/she hears the word “Free”. Whether the dog is lying down, sitting or in any position that involves duration, the cue “Free” signals to the dog the end of the behavior.

Material: clicker and treats

TRAINING PLAN		
1.	Shaping No clicker	Watch your dog and wait for a moment of stillness. Be patient, allow the dog to move around and wait for him/her to choose to stop moving, whether they are standing, sitting or lying down. As soon as the dog stays still for 1-2 seconds, say the word “Free”, then take a step back. This will prompt the dog to move out of position. Treat the dog as soon as they move.
2.	Fading the prompt and proofing the cue	Say the word “Free”, then take a step back, click and treat as soon as the dog moves out of position. Repeat this step until the dog starts moving out of position before you move. After 3-4 times, gradually fade out your movement backwards (take a smaller step, lean back, etc.) until you can stay completely still and the dog gets out of position to the word “Free” only.
3.	Building duration	Wait for the dog to stay still for longer periods of time. Gradually build duration, waiting for the dog to stop moving for up to 6 seconds, before you give the cue to get out of position (“Free”). It’s important to increase the duration randomly, so you might click and treat at 4 seconds, then 2 seconds, then 5 seconds, etc.
4.	Changing your position	Repeat the behavior while in different positions (standing in front of the dog, standing parallel to the dog, sitting on a chair, sitting on the floor, lying down, etc.). Anytime you change your position, if you find yourself repeating the cue more than twice, you need to go back a few steps and build the behavior up again. If needed, you can also shape the behavior as you did step 1, while you’re in different positions.
5.	Building distance	Take a step away from your dog and ask for the behavior. The purpose here is to be able to give the cue ‘Free’ while at a distance of at least 5 feet from the dog.
6.	Generalization	Use the cue “Free” when working on other behaviors such as “sit”, “down”, “bed”, “stand” etc. Change your location. Work with your dog in a different room, in the yard, in the back of the car, in a store, at the mall, etc. Ask other handlers to work with the dog. Keep the level of distractions low at first, then gradually build it up until the dog is responsive in most situations when out in public.
7.	Fluency	You’ll want to gradually build up the level of difficulty until you can successfully get your dog to get out of any position, in all sorts of places, with lots going on, and start using this cue in everyday life.

CONGRATULATIONS! If you’ve come this far, you have taught the dog a solid response to the word “Free”.