



HEEL

Level 1

Goal: The dog will get in position, on our left side when hearing the word “Heel”. This is different than obedience where heel means walking in position. When hearing the word “Heel” the dog will go to your left and shift their hips around until perfectly aligned with you, their head facing forward.

Material: Platform (just the size needed for your dog to stand on it), clicker and treats

TRAINING PLAN		
1.	Getting started/ Shaping & luring	<p>Be ready with your clicker in hand and place the platform on the floor. Click and treat for any movement towards the platform such as a look, a step or even better, a paw on the platform. The goal is to teach the dog to place all four paws on the platform and stay there. Be patient and gradually increase your criteria until the dog places all four paws on the platform.</p> <p>This step could also be lured: hold several treats in your hand, place them in front of the dog’s nose, then guide them onto the platform. You can release treats, one a time, while the dog is following your hand. Once all four paws on the platform, click and treat. Click and treat again if the dog holds the position on the platform.</p> <p>Once the dog has remained on the platform for a few seconds, click, then treat away from the platform (to set the dog up to repeat the behavior).</p> <p>Repeat this step until the dog immediately goes back to the platform after eating the treat away from it.</p>
2.	Increasing criteria	<p>Once the dog consistently places their paws on the platform and stays there, stand next to the platform (with the platform along your left side). Lure the dog with your left hand, towards the back of the platform, then pivot around and onto the platform facing forward (you’ll make a big circle against the clock, with your left arm, going out first, then behind, then towards you). This should cause the dog to get into position in a perfect “Heel” right next to you, head facing forward. Click and treat the dog for getting into position. Wait 2-4 seconds, then click and treat again for holding the position. Click and treat the dog away from the platform to set them up to repeating the behavior.</p> <p>After a few repetitions, wait and see if the dog gets on the platform in their own. Repeat this step until the dog automatically gets into a “Heel” position next to you.</p>
3.	Adding the cue	<p>Say the word “Heel” as the dog gets in position by your side. You’ll have to repeat this 50-100 times for the dog to make the connection between the word “heel” and the behavior of shifting his/her hips into position.</p>
7.	Fading out the platform	<p>To eliminate the platform, you can try removing it completely during a training session, after the dog has gotten in the position 5-6 times in a row. You might</p>



		need to gradually reduce the platform and look for ways to make it smaller and/or thinner (using different platforms and/or transition to a sheet of paper that you can gradually make disappear).
9.	Building distance	Start taking bigger steps away from the dog. The goal is for you to be able to face the dog, several steps away, say the word “Heel” and have the dog move right by your side into a “Heel” position.
10.	Building distractions	Gradually increase the level of distractions. Ask the dog to “Heel” while there’s a toy or ball or even treats on the floor, etc. Ask the dog to “Heel” while there are other people standing several feet away, then closer. Ask the dog to “Heel” while there is another dog nearby. Say another word or make another sound. Work very gradually and be creative with this step.
11.	Generalization	Change your location. Work with your dog in a different room, in the yard, 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.
12.	Fluency	You’ll want to gradually build up the level of difficulty until you can successfully get your dog to “Heel” in all sorts of places with lots going on and start using this cue in everyday life, whenever you need to get the dog in position by your side, on the left.

CONGRATULATIONS! If you’ve come this far, you have taught the dog a very elegant way to move to your left side.