



Beyond the Back Yard:

Train Your Dog to Listen Anytime, Anywhere!



Denise Fenzi
Instructors Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Instructor's Guide for *Beyond the Back Yard: Train Your Dog to Listen Anytime, Anywhere!*, a book about the Fenzi Distraction Training Method. This guide is designed to assist professional dog trainers who wish to implement the principles introduced in *Beyond the Back Yard* in a group class setting.

This guide is a complementary program to supplement the book. It does NOT offer the same set of exercises. There is no requirement that you purchase the book in order to use this guide, nor is there a requirement that your students purchase the book. However, the recommended homework for each class is based on the book, so if you choose not to use the book, then you will need to create your own homework program.

Although *Beyond the Back Yard* and this Instructor's Guide can be used independently of one another, students who work through the book at home while also attending a class outlined here will be a good deal further ahead than a person who does only one or the other.

Students will receive a great deal of value from taking this class while working on the plan set out in the book. An instructor provides personalized coaching for each team and helps evaluate the appropriate challenge level for them. The class format also makes it easier to consistently set up training scenarios that would be difficult or even impossible for an individual working alone to obtain. It provides for a greater number of distractions, both dogs and people, in a controlled environment.

As any professional trainer knows, each session of a class will be slightly different. Due to the varying skill levels of each participant and the group dynamics as a whole, some groups or classes will move through the material outlined here much faster than others. That's fine! As an instructor, your primary job is to adjust your expectations for each student and for each group of students, not to follow a rigid curriculum. Feel free to omit exercises or delay them a week as is necessary. If you have a group of students who are especially quick, I have offered suggestions at the end of this guide to increase the challenge level.

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As with most endeavors in life, this was not a solo project. I wish to thank the many students at the Fenzi Dog Sports Academy who ran demo classes and provided valuable feedback. In particular, I wish to thank Karen Johnston for videotaping her demonstration class. Those videos can be found here and help to clarify the written materials. Some of these videos are unedited to present a realistic view of the challenges you may face while teaching this class.



CLASS GUIDELINES

Recommended Class Size

Maximum of six teams

Class Length

60 Minutes

Model

Each week offers a suggested lecture component, as well as a series of exercises that build on the prior week. Students who miss the occasional class should be able to catch up if they are carefully working through the home program.

Selection of Exercises

Based on your group, select the exercises you think you can work through in each class. You may not be able to complete all of the exercises each week, or you may find that you run out of material. Professional dog trainers know this is normal. Use your professional judgment. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this the correct set of exercises for this group of students?
- Is this too much work or not enough?
- Do I need to modify some exercises for the safety or comfort of a specific team?

Use this program as a guide, and then make it work within your structure! Let the attitude of the participants (canine and human), and their progress from week to week guide you in your decisions.

Selection of Students

This is NOT a beginner level course. Both the book and this curriculum assume that the dog/handler teams have some prior skills. The following criteria should be considered as prerequisites for enrollment:

- The dog knows basic behaviors such as sit, stay, come, and loose leash walking if the person is holding a cookie.
- Dogs should be roughly one year of age or older—mature, younger puppies are also welcome.
- NO resource guarding behaviors—people will be taking things away from dogs.
- NO antisocial or fearful dogs (to dogs or people). Because this class is about withstanding distractions, some dogs will experience this class as pressure, which could make those issues worse.
- Dogs must possess a usable motivator (toys, food, praise, etc.). For the purposes of this class, we will use food, but feel free to make appropriate substitutions as needed. Just make sure that your choices are actually motivating for the dog!
- Give special consideration to admitting dogs with serious food allergies—the dogs could potentially get into food that they are allergic to. Discuss with owners on a case-by-case basis to determine the suitability of this class environment for their issues.



Materials Needed: Supplied by Instructor

- A suitable class space with as few distractions as possible
- A variety of treats of different values to be used for distraction and/or reward
- Sturdy tables to place treats on
- Containers of varying degrees of strengths, depending on the dogs in the class; if hard plastic, drill holes in the top to allow as much food scent as possible to escape

If your class is advanced and progressing particularly well, you may wish to incorporate any or all of the follow distractions, substituting and using them as appropriate:

- Toys (balls, squeaky, and stuffed)
- Remote controlled car/ stuffed animals (provided they are not scary to the dogs!)
- Large stuffed dogs
- Rodent-type animals safely contained in cages (do not allow dogs to scare caged animals!)

Materials Needed: Supplied by Students

- Chair
- Treats for rewarding their dogs (in addition to those provided by the instructor)
- A crate, mat, or tie-out (crate or tie out strongly recommended, but not required if dog has reliable mat behavior); if these are not available, use students' family members or the instructor's assistants/ interns to assist in restraining the dogs when needed
- Four- to six-foot leash
- Collar or non-restrictive harness (front clip okay); no head halters—the dog needs the freedom to make a choice, and head halters will turn the dog away from the distraction, therefore removing that choice
- Family Members! Use family members as helpers. Incorporate them into the work! For safety/ liability reasons, do not use children as babysitters for uncontrolled distractions.
- For homework, a copy of the book *Beyond The Back Yard: Train Your Dog To Listen Anytime, Anywhere!*



WEEK #1: OBEDIENCE REVIEW and TWO COOKIE FEEDING

LECTURE

Begin by introducing yourself, the book, and, finally, the class with the question: What does your dog REALLY know? Obedience is contextual! Chapter 3 of *Beyond the Back Yard* discusses this in depth. For more information, here is a blog written for competition teams—but the issues are the same: [Denise Fenzi Blog: What Does Your Dog Know?](#)

Talk about the importance of setting up training sessions so the dog can be successful; success is more instrumental in learning than failure. Emphasize that it is more important to work at the dog's pace than it is to keep up with others. At the same time, briefly discuss how to handle failure. Chapters 3 and 14 discuss this at length; encourage students to read them!

Encourage students to allow their dogs to make choices! Dogs learn much faster when they learn what works or does not work with minimal human interference. (More on this next week...)

Finally, discuss and demonstrate the use of two cookies for success. The first marks the behavior and the second reorients the dog towards the handler and away from the distraction. This makes snatching cookies and lunging at distractions much less likely over time. One of the most valuable things that can happen in a distraction class is that the dogs start to reorient to the handler under distraction!

CLASS EXERCISES

Class Exercise # 1.1: Review basic obedience skills.

GOAL: Strengthen basic exercises; begin team building (students watch each other)

Possible behaviors include sit, down, stay, come, walk nicely on leash, and a mat behavior. Because this is a review of what the students already know, set this up so there are no distractions—each team should go one at a time.

Class Exercise # 1.2: Practice the “two cookies for success” model.

GOAL: Teach a reorient-to-handler behavior.

Instruct students to feed the dog one cookie for performing a behavior, and then a second cookie as the student backs up and brings the dog closer to the handler. This lures the reorienting behavior.

If the dog fails to reorient after successfully performing the behavior and taking one cookie, encourage the handler to place the cookie directly in front of the dog's nose and turn the dog towards the handler. If the dog fails to follow the second cookie, he is either over threshold (move him), not motivated (use higher value motivator), or fearful (not appropriate for this class).

**Class Exercise # 1.3: Have all students work at the same time**

GOAL: Introduce distraction in the form of other working teams (generalization)

Students should be as far apart from each other as possible to minimize distraction. The rate of reinforcement should be 100%.

Challenge Game: What does your dog know?

Have people ask their dogs to sit under a variety of challenges. With a person sitting in a chair, with the students' hands behind their backs, with their back to their dogs, while sitting on the floor, etc. Work through all of the "known" behaviors. Can the dogs "go to mat" without the handler walking in that direction? Can they stay there with only one cue? Can they walk on a loose leash when the handler walks slowly, normally, or at a modest jog? Can they recall when the person is out of sight? Lying on the floor? When looking at a book?

HOMEWORK

Strongly suggest that each student spend five minutes, twice a day, reviewing the basic cues of sit, down, stay, come, and loose leash walking at home.

Have students read the whole book! (It's not so long.)

VIDEOS

[Week 1 video examples](#)

[Unedited Videos Wk1: Part 1](#)

This video demonstrates 1) how to feed with two cookies and 2) working with dogs to check the fluency of their behavior under unusual circumstances.

[Unedited Videos Wk1: Part 2](#)

Here, students practice feeding two cookies and working with their dogs, first alone, and then with the distraction of a second dog.

[Unedited Videos Wk1: Part 3](#)

This video shows "two cookie" and challenge game errors.



WEEK #2: CONTROLLED DISTRACTIONS

LECTURE

Quickly review each student's basic obedience exercises, either as a group or one at a time—however it works best for you! Answer questions about the book and how to proceed with homework if there is confusion. If it works better, answer those questions at the end of class.

Discuss the importance of “choice” in the learning process, with special emphasis on the fact that it is very important to not pull on the collar or use verbal scolding to try and coerce compliance. The dogs **MUST** figure out in these early stages (when we *could* force compliance) that it is in their best interest to comply—the time will come when we cannot force compliance. Our long term goal is cooperation without a cookie in sight and while the dog is off leash, so keep your eye on the prize, not the middle steps.

CLASS EXERCISES

Class Exercise # 2.1: Dog turns away from controlled distraction one-on-one with instructor

GOAL: Introduce an easily controlled distraction and create the beginnings of a reorienting behavior in the presence of a distraction.

For this exercise, you will work with each dog individually. You will hold a low value cookie that is inside a container while standing near or in front of the student's dog. Minimize eye contact by looking directly at the handler instead of the dog in order to prevent intimidating or frightening the dog. The container will prevent the dog from accessing the cookie.

The handlers will have their dogs on leash. During a team's turn, the handler's job is to wait. When dog looks away from container (out of boredom!) the dog gets two cookies from the handler—one near the container, and the second as they are backing away together. Repeat until each dog turns away quickly (less than five seconds) from the instructor to get cookies from the handler. Encourage students to praise their dogs for their choice as they give the cookies!

There will be dogs who persist on getting into that container. Be patient! It is normal for some dogs to take a couple of minutes to succeed for the first time. Coach students to say nothing and do not help or threaten the dog. Eventually ALL dogs turn away—make sure handler is ready with that cookie in hand! Do not lure the dog off the distraction. Remember, choice is very important!

Class Exercise # 2.2: Controlled distractions in pairs

GOAL: Students will learn how to set up and handle distractions.

This exercise is the same as exercise 2.1, except the students will pair up with one another or with a family member to assist. Stress the importance of not letting dogs get to the treat and that the helper should not stare at the dog!

Class Exercise # 2.3: Distraction in instructor's hand



GOAL: Generalization of distractions. Dog learns that whether distractions are in a container or in someone's hand, the distractions are still not available to them.

This is performed in the same way as exercise 2.1, except the treat is in the instructor's hand. Turn your hand so the back of your hand is to the dog. If that is successful, raise criteria by turning the front of the hand (fist) to the dog.

Class Exercise #2.4: Distraction in hand—in teams

GOAL: Generalization of distractions.

This is the same as exercise 2.3, except students hold the treats for one another. Remind student helpers to look at each other, not at the dog!

Class exercise #2.5: Distraction on floor

GOAL: Generalization. Now, the distraction could be in a container, in a hand, or on the floor. The dog cannot get to any of them.

Place a treat on the floor, and have the handler cover it with their foot (without smashing it!). When the dog stops messing with the handler's foot, reward the dog from hand. After several more repetitions, pick up the cookie and give it to the dog after requesting a simple behavior; it could be as simple as eye contact.

Some dogs will persist in trying to get the cookie from under the foot; be patient, and strongly discourage students from pulling on the leash to force cooperation. Also discourage verbal scolding of any type. All dogs will succeed if the owner is patient and if the dog is ready for this class!

Class Exercise #2.6: Distraction plus behavior

GOAL: Teach the dog that reorienting may not be enough—they must also listen and watch carefully to see any additional cues that will earn them a reinforcer.

For very advanced dogs, or for very small classes that progress quickly, practice asking for a single behavior (sit, down, etc.) after dog orients away from the handler's foot. Allow hand signals and multiple verbals as necessary! If a dog fails to follow a cue, simply wait a couple of seconds and attempt again. When the dog succeeds, the cookie comes AFTER the cued behavior—not for eye contact. If a dog fails more than three times, go back to a cookie simply for reorienting. Be sure to use a very easy behavior such as sit. If a dog understands lures and hand signals, you can add those to create success.

More advanced teams might place a cookie near (but not under) the foot where it can be covered as needed. See if the dog can look at the handler for a cookie from the hand! Either a leash or a speedy foot can be used to protect the cookie!

Challenge Game: Distraction Stays

Place dogs in a row on a sit or down stay, with the handlers standing at their dogs' sides. Walk in front of each team and place a cookie on the ground, up to several feet away, depending on how advanced the team



is. After about 10 seconds, each handler will walk up to the cookie, pick it up, return to the dog's side, and give it to the dog.

For even more challenge, have the instructor drop (or toss!) the cookie onto the ground. Prevent dogs from failing by having the handlers stand on their leashes. Put the dog back as often as is needed for the handler to be able to reach success. If the dog is unable to succeed after several attempts, the instructor will pick up the cookie, hand it to the student, and the student will give it to their (staying) dog.

HOMEWORK

At home, students should begin working through the exercises in the book, in order. Most exercises do not require a helper, and the more your students work those exercises between classes, the better the dog will do in class!

VIDEOS

[Week 2 Exercises](#)

[Unedited Videos Wk2: Part 1](#)

Here the dogs are practicing the sequence of cue, distraction, reward. The dogs turn away from a distraction in a container and being rewarded, then with the cookie under foot, and finally with an exposed cookie near the foot.

[Unedited Videos Wk2: Part 2](#)

The dogs work on leaving a person with a cookie in the hand and being rewarded appropriately.

[Unedited Videos Wk3: Part 3](#)

A variety of dogs and breeds practice backing up with their handler for cookies. Then they work with distraction cookies in another person's hand; the dogs leave the distraction and are rewarded by their handlers with the "two cookie" method.



WEEK #3: RAISING CRITERIA

LECTURE

Start with a verbal review of the prior week's exercises. Ask if there any questions, either about the group exercises from class or the homework exercises from the book.

Discuss the idea of "asking for more" (raising criteria). Raising criteria is a classic way to reduce reinforcement. In the book, we raise criteria in the amount and difficulty level of the distraction, but raising criteria can also include asking for more than one behavior before reinforcement. That is what will happen this week. Rather than just reorienting to the handler for a single cookie, we will add another behavior on top of turning away to get the cookie.

CLASS EXERCISES

Class Exercise #3.1: Turn away from distractions, plus add another behavior

GOAL: Reducing reinforcement and a basic introduction to the idea of negative reinforcement for some teams.

To begin, handlers will have their dogs on leash and a high value cookie ready in their hands. Approach each team, holding a low value cookie in a container or in your hand. Minimize eye contact by looking directly at the handler and not at the dog. Wait. When dog looks away from the instructor (out of boredom!), he should reorient to the handler. If he does, the handler will give a simple obedience cue. Make sure the dog looks at the handler for at least one second before cuing the behavior to ensure that the dog is really paying attention.

If the dog performs, he gets two cookies from the handler—one for performing the cue, and the second as the team backs away. Encourage the student to praise the dog for the good choice! If the dog looks to the handler but turns back to the assistant without completing the cue, that's fine! No cookie. When the dog tries again, the exercise starts again. Make sure the handler does not try to prevent the dog from turning back to the assistant.

Class Exercise #3.2 Same behavior, different cookie

GOAL: Raise criteria by using equal value cookies. Help the dog understand that the exercise is the same even with equal value cookies.

This exercise is the same as the first, except this time the instructor and the handler have equal treats. It's best to do this by having the instructor move up to a higher value treat rather than having the handler downgrade to a lower value treat. Proceed as above; reward after the dog turns away and performs a cued obedience command. The dog must do both eye contact and a behavior to earn reinforcement. Remember, two cookies for success!

Class Exercise #3.3: Controlled distractions that move locations

GOAL: Generalize the location of the distraction for the dog, and help the handlers learn how to practice distraction work on their own.



Place treats on a table, chair, or floor, according to the dog's abilities. Make sure the dog will be unable to get to the treats either because of a leash or because of the container the treats are in (select according to the tenacity and temperament of the dog). Wait until the dog turns away from the treat and reward with the two treat method. Teams can practice simultaneously at their stations with supervision from the instructor.

Class Exercise # 3.4: Distractions appear uncontrolled... but aren't

GOAL: The dog learns that even distractions that appear uncontrolled may be controlled. ALL people will help the handler. The dog begins to show obedience and the ability to recall away from a distraction.

This is the same as exercise 3.3, but now use a human assistant to ensure compliance rather than a container. Dogs can be on leash or in a safely contained area (like a few ex-pens hooked together or a small room). Demonstrate this exercise with each dog one at a time before allowing students to pair up and take turns being assistants. More advanced students should stand much further away from the dog when giving the obedience command, after the dog turns to them. If the handler is more than a few feet away, a recall is the logical choice so the dog will learn to recall away from the distraction.

Class Exercise # 3.5: Rotating stations

GOAL: Dog learns that the location is irrelevant; cooperation is the only way to win reinforcement. Dogs generalize from working in their own territory to working in ALL territory within the training area.

Now have the teams rotate around the room so that they are using someone else's station. If each person brings a chair and/or crate, the stations should look different.

Most dogs will be able to give both a reorienting behavior AND an obedience behavior, but some dogs may need to work on simply reorienting. Again, more advanced teams might be working close to the distraction OR the handler might be further from the dog. Some dogs might be able to do loose leash walking so close to the distraction that they could even steal the reinforcer if they were quick. Just remember to set teams up for success!

Class Exercise # 3.6: Dog does not approach distraction

GOAL: Dog looks at distractions, but moves on without making an effort to investigate it first. This prevents creating a behavior chain in which the dog goes up to the distraction, explores it, and then returns to the handler.

Have the baiter stand with the distraction either in a container or loose in the hand. With the dog on a four foot leash, have the team walk past the baiter about six feet away. If the leash tightens because the dog is trying to get to the distraction, then the handler must back up and try again! The only way the dog can get past the distraction is by either keeping the leash loose or only briefly tightening the leash before moving on with the handler.

When the dog successfully passes the distraction, the handler will reward the dog as they are both moving away from the distraction. If the dog tries to go back to the distraction after getting the cookie, try the exercise again but have the dog and handler move further past the distraction before rewarding. If the dog fails, try the exercise further from the distraction until the dog gets the idea, and then slowly move closer.



Challenge Game: New training location

Move to a new part of the training area (a different room in the building or another part of the park). Have each team work each of their basic behaviors (ie, walk nicely on a leash, a stay, recall, etc.). Be very generous with reinforcement. Remind students that some dogs might need to work at a much lower level in order to move forward. That's okay!

HOMEWORK

At home, students should continue working through the exercises in the book, in order. Remind the students that this is not a race. Work through each exercise until it is well understood by the dog.

VIDEOS

[Week 3 Exercises](#)

[Unedited Videos Wk3: Part 1](#)

The first six exercises are demonstrated here.

[Unedited Videos Wk3: Part 2](#)

A review of several exercises up to this point.



WEEK #4: COOKIES OUT OF HANDS

LECTURE

Start with a review of the prior week's activities; we increased the value of the distraction held by the instructor, we practiced generalization, and we showed dogs that "uncontrolled" distractions might indeed be controlled. We also began to teach the dog not to approach distractions through the use of the loose leash walking exercise. Make sure you allow for time to answer questions from the book.

Introduce the fact that today, students will start holding the cookies in their pockets rather than in their hands for each exercise. Do NOT use bait bags clipped to the handler. This is part of the process of reducing reinforcers by making the cookies invisible until the dog has earned them. It also gets dogs out of the "show me the money" habit.

CLASS EXERCISES

Class Exercise #4.1: Moving cookie distractions

GOAL: Increase the value of the distraction by adding motion to the cookie.

This exercise can be done one-on-one with the instructor or in pairs. The dog will be on a short leash; the instructor/helper will be outside of the dog's reach and will drop a treat on the ground. The working dog will start with his easiest exercise (likely reorienting), and progress through more challenging ones like sits, stays, recalls, and loose leash walking. Handlers can reward with a cookie held in their hands for this exercise.

If the dog goes for the cookie, the team will start all over again. If there are more than three failures, make the exercise easier by either placing the treat on the ground, or dropping it a shorter distance. For more advanced dogs, you can throw the treat in the direction of the dog.

Class Exercise #4.2: Rewards in the pockets, not the hands

GOAL: Reduce reinforcers by changing the location of the reinforcer.

Have students place their reward cookies in their pockets and then start all over again! Go back to the simplest exercises from weeks 1 and 2. For example, have students pair up. The assistants will hold cookies in their hands or in a container while the working handler has no visible cookies (the rewards are in pockets now). When the dog turns away from the assistant (which should happen very quickly if the dog is ready for this step), the handler should praise the dog continuously while backing away from the distraction and simultaneously getting a cookie out of their pocket for the dog. No obedience cue is needed at this very first level, but within one or two repetitions, the handler should begin adding obedience cues.

If a dog fails, show the dog the cookie that he will not be getting, return the cookie to the handler's pocket, and start over. Wait the dog out—if the handler is too slow to get the cookie out and the dog gives up and returns to the assistant with the cookie, let the dog go! Then start all over again! Of course, you should be encouraging your students to get a treat out of their pockets and into the dog's mouth within five to ten



seconds. That might be something to practice without the dog with less coordinated students.

Class Exercise #4.3: Distractions on tables, chairs, and floors

GOAL: Generalize the idea that the location of the distraction does not matter AND location of the reinforcer also do not matter.

Now students will work alone at their individual chair/mat areas. The distractions will be placed on a table, chair, or floor, depending on how quickly the dog is progressing. Emphasize setting the dogs up for success! Reward cookies remain in the handler's pocket.

At first, the dogs will be rewarded simply for turning away from the distractions, but as the dogs progress, the handler will request (and receive!) compliance to an obedience cue from the dog before backing up and rewarding from their pocket.

For dogs who need greater challenges, have the handler work for as long as ten seconds before offering a cookie from the pocket, or have them stand further away from the dog, or have the dog closer to the distraction. Recalls away from the distraction and stays very close to the distraction are also good options.

Class Exercise: #4.4: Rotating stations

GOAL: Additional generalization of locations for working, distractions, and reinforcers.

The final exercise will repeat the previous exercise, except that students will rotate around the room so that they are working at other teams' stations.

Challenge Game #1: Distraction stays

Place dogs on a sit stay in a row, approximately 10 feet apart. Place a cookie on the ground about 15 feet in front of each team. Now have the handlers leave their dogs and turn to face them from about six feet away (the cookie is now ten feet behind the handlers). Have the handlers call their dogs to front and give their dogs a cookie from their pockets. They then leave their dogs again, go get the cookie on the ground, and return to their dogs—and give the dogs the bonus cookie!

Challenge Game #2: More distraction stays

Now repeat the first challenge game, but place the cookies BEHIND the dogs so they are moving away from the cookies. Use either leashes or cookie containment to ensure there is no failure. If a dog does not wish to recall away from the cookie, the students should talk the dog into it using their voice and enthusiasm; do not reel the dog in with the leash or show a cookie from the pocket. Eventually, help students understand that compliance with a single cue is the goal.

HOMEWORK

At home, students should continue working through the exercises in the book, in order. Answer any questions that students might have about their homework.



VIDEOS

[Week 4 Exercises](#)

[Unedited Videos Wk4: Part 1](#)

Includes a review of the prior week, with an emphasis on loose leash walking and adding movement to the distraction (trainer drops the cookie).

[Unedited Videos Wk4: Part 2](#)

Demonstrates challenge games 1 and 2.



WEEK #5: COOKIES OFF THE BODY

LECTURE

Quickly discuss the principle that location of the cookie is not relevant—ACCESS is everything. The only question a dog needs to ask at this point is, “do you have access?” And the answer is always “yes.” Review homework from the book, and ask if there are questions.

CLASS EXERCISES

Exercise #5.1: Basic obedience with no visible cookies

GOAL: Generalization of basic obedience without a cookie in the hand and in a new area.

If appropriate, take students outside of the regular training area, or if this is not possible, into a new part of the same space. With food in the students’ pockets (but not visible to the dog), work on simple obedience such as sit, down, stay, etc. without distractions for several minutes. The dogs should not see what food they will be receiving, nor should there be a visible cue like a bait bag available. Strongly encourage students to use their pockets instead and to get rid of the bait bag entirely for a period of time.

Exercise #5.2: Students have no food

GOAL: Dog shows basic obedience when cookies are completely off the handler’s body and carried by another person. This also emphasizes that people cooperate with each other—good for dogs to understand!

Remove all food from the students’ bodies. The instructor or another helper will carry all food and will give it to the students to give to their dogs as they work through the following exercises. The choice of behavior is not important; students might want to work a stay, a recall, or loose leash walking.

Dog ignores the treat in the instructor’s hand. Once successful, give a different (but similar value) piece to the student to give to the dog. An even better scenario would involve a second person on the handler’s other side giving the treat to the handler (to give to the dog).

Dog ignores a treat on the ground. Again, the instructor/assistant gives treats to the handler to give to the dog.

Students rotate around the room so that students are working at other stations; the reward process is the same.

Students pair up and work with each other; the assistant carries the cookies and hands them to the trainer as they are requested.

Increase the challenge level as appropriate. For example, dropping a cookie in front of the dog, throwing food towards or near the dog, etc. Challenge can also be increased by working the dog closer to the distraction or asking for more than one or two behaviors before reinforcing. Dogs can be on leash or off leash, as appropriate. Assistants can act as distraction babysitters if dogs are off leash.



Exercise #5.3: The distraction becomes the reward

GOAL: Raising criteria by removing treats from body and asking the dog to work in the presence of distraction.

Students now return to their work spaces. Again, the students will have no food on their bodies, but instead, the rewards for the dogs are placed on their crates/chairs. Note that the dog's treats now act as both the distraction and the source of the reward. Teams will work at distances varying from 2 feet to 30 feet (according to their abilities) from the treats. Have the dogs perform simple obedience exercises (sit, down, stay, etc.).

Every success is rewarded either by having both members of the team return to the crate/chair, where the handler gives a treat to the dog, OR the dog is left on a sit or down stay while the handler goes to get a treat and returns to give it to the dog. If the dog returns to the treats with the handler, work it as a loose leash walking exercise—the dog must walk nicely to the crate. Be aware that the further the dog has to walk to get rewarded, the harder this is; in addition, the closer the team gets to the treats, the more challenging the loose leash walking will be. Set teams up for success. For example, have them approach the crate from the side rather than head on, especially for more impulsive dogs.

For dogs who fail, you have options! First, simply wait the dog out. For example, if the dog chooses to simply stare at the treat bowl, then let him; when the dog gets tired of that, start the exercise again. Second, remind the dog why he cares by showing the dog the cookies and then put them back before trying again! This is a very good option if the dog is simply staring around the room rather than working. Third, end the exercise entirely, and give the dog a break. His head might be full!

Exercise #5.4: Rotating stations with reward/distractions

GOAL: Generalize the ability to work in a variety of locations without treats obviously present.

Repeat exercise 5.3, except have students rotate so they are now working in someone else's space. You'll need to plan a bit for this and have students place their treats in someone else's area in advance. If it is possible to work outside of the regular training space, this would be an excellent time for a field trip! Even moving to a different part of the same building, into an entryway, or across a park will have value.

Challenge Game: Group walking and stays

Have dogs practice their loose leash walking in a group through the training area. Every time the instructor calls "halt," each team stops, puts their dogs on a stay, goes to get a cookie, and brings it back to their dogs. Vary the halts randomly so the dogs might be walking for five seconds or 45 seconds before earning reinforcement. For less advanced students, have them practice their loose leash walking for a shorter period of time or closer to the source of their reinforcers.

HOMEWORK

Students should continue working through the exercises in the book, in order. If they have been working regularly, they should be most of the way through the book.



VIDEOS

[Week 5 Exercises](#)

[Unedited Videos Wk5: Part 1](#)

Teams are working without treats in their hands, and later with no treats on their bodies. The dogs are working in groups now. Rotating locations is also demonstrated.



WEEK #6: GRADUATION

LECTURE

It's graduation week! There are no new exercises this week, but instead, a series of games to review what's been done so far. You may choose to ask your students to let you know which exercise they found most valuable and work on that one before moving on to the graduation games. Handlers should not have cookies on their bodies this week.

GRADUATION GAMES

Game #1: Cookie stays

Line all of the dogs up on a stay. Place cookies ten feet in front of each dog, and have the handlers significantly further away—up to twenty or thirty feet, depending on each team's ability. Vary the duration of the stay according to the ability of the teams. With more advanced teams, direct the handler to walk around the room.

Game #2: Cookie circle

Place cookies on the floor in the middle of a circle. Have the dogs loose leash walk around the cookies in a circle; more advanced teams can get closer to the cookies. Whenever the instructor calls "cookies!" all teams will stop, place their dogs on a stay, and handlers will retrieve a cookie from the pile and return to their dog with it. If allergies are not an issue, place a variety of treats in that pile for the handlers to select from.

Game #3: Cookie toss

Have students pair up and stand about 8 feet apart. One at a time, the dogs will do a stay about 10 feet away (possibly on a mat). Have the handlers toss a cookie back and forth. When they stop tossing the cookie, have the handler call the dog. The dog is rewarded with the cookie that was being used in the game. For extra challenge, start the recall as the cookie has already been tossed, so dog sees it pass in front as he recalls.

Game #4: Cookie walk

Place baggies with food on the ground, scattered around the area. Have teams loose leash walk close enough to the baggies that the dogs could get to them! The dogs should keep the leashes loose. When the instructor calls "cookies!" the handler will head to the closest baggie, open it, and give the dog a cookie.

Game #5: Cookie recalls

This uses the same setup as game #4, except now the dogs will be doing recalls through the baggies. You will set this game up dependent on the overall level of the groups. For more sophisticated groups, leave all dogs on a stay at the same time, and call the dogs individually through the distractions. Instructors will deliver rewards to the handlers to give to their dogs. For more beginner groups, train each dog one at a time while the other dogs wait their turn.

Game #6: Cookie pull

For this game, place all of the dogs on a stay or on a mat. Have the instructor offer each dog a cookie and try to "pull" the dog off the mat—do this for no more than five seconds. If the dog resists, have the instructor move on to the next dog while the handler of the successful dog goes and gets a treat from their stash in the



room (remember, no cookies on the body!).

CELEBRATION

End class with a big celebration; the teams learned a lot! Encourage students who are ready to move on to an advanced class. For students who are still struggling, encourage them to repeat this class as often as they wish until their dogs are ready to move on. It's a hard class! Students should feel free to repeat it as many times as is needed—foundations are awesome!

VIDEOS

[Challenge Games](#)

[Unedited Videos Wk6: Part 1](#)



ADDING OFF LEASH WORK

Off-leash reliability is one of the goals of Beyond the Back Yard. But as you know, this doesn't just happen; you need to train for it! If you have a particularly advanced class, they may be ready for off-leash work before the end of your six week class. If not, you may wish to develop your own class incorporating off-leash work.

To test for readiness to go off leash, ask the following questions about each team:

- Does the dog keep the leash loose?
- Is the handler relaxed?
- Has the dog demonstrated an effective recall away from distractions?

If so, they're probably ready. But before you let them go, we're going to do one more test. Run each team through the obstacle course described below. The teams should go one at a time. The other students will man the stations to act as babysitters for the distractions. They will also have their dogs on leash and with them at the stations to act as another distraction.

If the dog never tightens the leash during the course, he's ready! If you want an objective test, try this: Pinch a loop into the leash about 1 foot up from the dog's collar. Now take a rubber band and put it over that loop in the leash. If the dog tightens the leash, then the rubber band will pop off - which means the dog is not ready to be off leash. If the rubber band is still there at the end of the course - it's time to go off leash. But remember, you are an instructor. Use your professional judgement!

Successful teams may then run the course a second time off leash. If a dog is struggling, put the leash back on or shorten the course.

Each station will require a table or a chair. There will be a sign at each station directing the working student on what to do. You may want to let the class "pre-run" the course so they feel comfortable with it before bringing their dogs into the picture. Feel free to change the number, order, or contents of each station according to the sophistication level of the class. In addition, always modify the stations for individuals if needed. For example, if a station requires a 30 second stay, it's okay if a dog can't give more than a five second sit stay. Each team should go home feeling successful.

Station #1: Distraction is food exposed on a table or chair

SIGN: Down your dog 10 feet away from this sign. With your back to your dog, recite the alphabet (the person working the table will tell you if the dog breaks and needs a reset). Return to your dog. Heel in a circle around this station. End with a recall of 10 feet away from the distraction. Reward!

If the dog performs well, the handler will take a treat off the table and give it to the dog.

Station #2: Same as station #1, except the handlers will have food rewards in their pockets. Handlers may give up to three treats from their pockets.

**Station #3:** Handler eats in front of the dog!

SIGN: Approach the table and pick up a piece of food. Then place your dog on a stay while you eat the snack. Drop a crumb on the floor and be ready to cover it with your foot! Advanced dogs will walk near/over the crumb. Reward like crazy!

Use small pieces of dog-safe human food for this one. Good options include non-chocolate candy or vegetables.

Station #4: No distractions, no rewards

SIGN: Perform the following exercises in order and without a cookie:

1. Sit
2. Down
3. 10 second stay
4. Recall

Feel free to substitute other exercises on the sign.

Station #5: Jackpot!

SIGN: Approach the table and ask your dog to perform ONE simple behavior like a sit or down. JACKPOT your dog with the distraction food.

Make sure this is truly a jackpot and have a nice bowl of treats on the table. Feel free to choose which behavior the dog performs, or allow handler's choice.

Station #6: Instructor's choice

Now you get to have a bit of fun. Make up a sign for your students. If you think some of these students might be interested in the sport of rally, use skills from that class! If not, stick with your basics. Use up to three exercises on the sign! Be creative here. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Heel in and out of cones
- Sit in a chair and read a short paragraph while the dog rests on a mat
- Remove the leash, place it on the table, and reward the dog
- Sit at the table and eat something
- Shake hands with the person sitting at the station
- Admire the other dog at the station

Remember, have fun. Make this program work for you and your students!



WRAPPING UP AND MOVING ON

This curriculum is designed to assist trainers who wish to help their students advance their dogs' practical obedience skills "beyond the back yard" and into the real world where challenges abound!

I hope that you've found these exercises fun and useful! If your students want to continue on, give some thought to your options. Simple ways to increase the challenges for more advanced work include:

Changing the number of distractions the dog has to ignore before reinforcement

Increasing the intensity of the distractions

Using a greater number of uncontrolled distractions

Requiring the dog to do more cues before reinforcement

Including more challenging base exercises, such as small jumps or tricks

Taking field trips to real world places like public fairs, baseball games, farmer's markets, etc.

Best of luck with your classes!