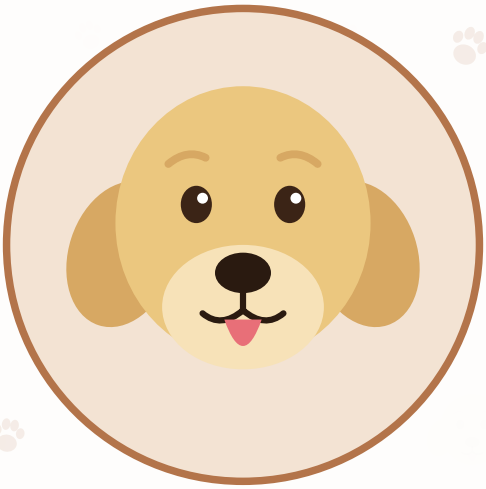


FREE BONUS GUIDE

The Stubborn Lab Reset

Turn "selective hearing" into a Lab who listens.

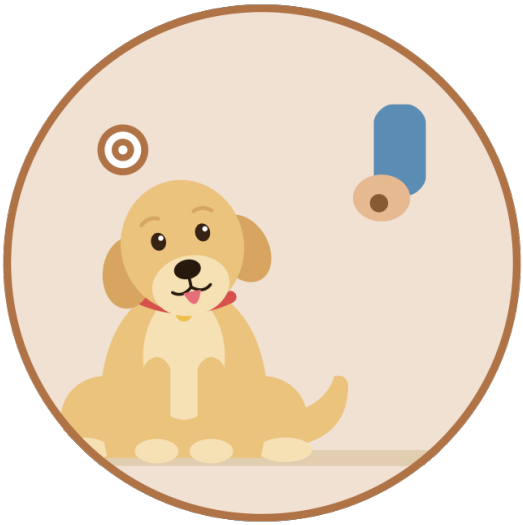
Bonus guide for The Complete Labrador Guide

Before We Begin

Your Lab knows "sit." You've seen them do it a hundred times in the kitchen. But at the park, at the front door, or when there's food nearby, they look at you, think about it, and carry on doing their own thing.

It's easy to call that stubbornness. But Labradors aren't stubborn in the way people think. They're clever, enthusiastic dogs who do what works for them. If listening to you doesn't seem worth it right now, they won't.

This reset shows you how to make listening the best choice your Lab can make, wherever you are.



Why Labs "Don't Listen"

The cue isn't clear

Many owners say "sit" in different ways: "sit," "sit down," "SIT!", "sit sit sit." To a dog, those are different sounds. Or the cue has only ever been practised in one place, so your Lab doesn't realise it means the same thing in the park.

The reward isn't worth it

Your Lab is deciding between a biscuit from you and a squirrel, a dropped sandwich or a muddy pond. If the reward isn't good enough, they'll choose the other option.

The cue has been "poisoned"

If "come" has often meant the end of fun, a bath or a telling off, your Lab learns to avoid it.

Too much, too soon

Asking for a perfect recall in a busy park before it works in the garden is like asking someone to run a marathon before they can jog.

Over-excitement

When your Lab is over-excited, they genuinely find it hard to think and listen.

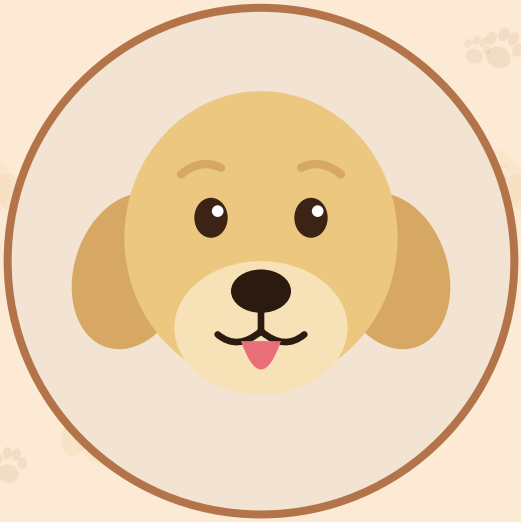
Why Labs "Don't Listen"

The Listening Assessment

Rate your Lab's response to each cue from 0 (never) to 3 (always), in three places:

- **At home:** sit, down, come, leave it, wait
- **In the garden:** sit, down, come, leave it, wait
- **On walks:** sit, down, come, leave it, wait

Most Labs score high at home and low on walks. That tells you where to focus: building the skills step by step from easy places to harder ones.



The Listening Toolkit

- **A reward ladder:** list your Lab's rewards from lowest to highest value: kibble, biscuits, cheese, chicken, a toy, a swim.
- **A treat pouch** so rewards are always ready.
- **A long line (10 metres)** for safe practice outdoors.
- **One word per cue,** agreed with the whole family.
- **Short sessions:** 3–5 minutes.

Using the reward ladder

- **Easy places, easy cues:** use lower-value rewards.
- **Hard places, hard cues:** use the top of the ladder.
- **Real-life rewards:** use what your Lab wants at that moment. Sniffing, swimming and greeting a friend can all be rewards for listening first.



The Reset Rules

Rule 1: Say It Once

Say each cue once, clearly. If your Lab doesn't respond, don't repeat it. Make it easier next time (closer, quieter, or a better reward).

Rule 2: Set Up for Success

Only ask for something when you're fairly sure your Lab can do it. Every success builds the habit of listening.

Rule 3: Pay Well

Reward every correct response for now. You'll reduce rewards later, once the skill is strong.

Rule 4: Never Punish Coming to You

Whatever happened before, if your Lab comes to you, they get rewarded.

Rule 5: Practise Everywhere

Practise each cue in many places: different rooms, the garden, the front of the house, quiet streets, then the park.



Rebuilding the Basics

Step 1: Fresh Start Cues

If a cue has been "poisoned," pick a new word. "Here" instead of "come." "Settle" instead of "lie down."

Step 2: The 5-Place Plan

Practise each cue in five places in order: kitchen, living room, garden, front of the house, quiet street. Only move on when your Lab gets it right 8 out of 10 times.

Step 3: Add Distance

Ask for a sit with you one step away, then two, then across the room.

Step 4: Add Duration

Ask for a sit and reward after 2 seconds, then 5, then 10.

Step 5: Add Distractions

Practise with a toy on the floor, then someone walking past, then food nearby. Add one distraction at a time.



Rebuilding the Basics

The Three Ds

Distance, duration and distraction are the "Three Ds." When you make one harder, make the other two easier. For example, if you're practising in a new place (more distraction), stay close and keep it short.



Making You More Interesting

A Lab who finds you interesting is a Lab who listens.

- **Be unpredictable:** sometimes reward with a treat, sometimes a game, sometimes a sniff.
- **Play together:** tug, find-it games and retrieves.
- **Check-in rewards:** reward every time your Lab chooses to look at you on walks.
- **Use your voice:** a happy, excited voice is far more inviting than a stern one.
- **Hand-feed some meals** as training rewards.

The Premack Principle

Use what your Lab wants as a reward for listening. Want to sniff that lamp post? Sit first, then "go sniff!" Want to swim? Come when called, then "go swim!" Your Lab learns that listening to you unlocks everything they want.



Common "Stubborn" Situations

Won't come back at the park

Go back to the long line. Practise recall in quieter places, and use the best rewards. See Chapter 8 of your main guide.

Won't sit at the door

Practise Door Zen (wait until your Lab is still before opening the door) several times a day.

Lies down and refuses to walk

Check for pain or tiredness first. Some Labs stop on walks when they want to go a different way. Wait calmly, then reward them for moving with you.

Ignores "leave it"

Practise at home with easy items first, and build up slowly. See The Food Thief Fix bonus.



Common "Stubborn" Situations

Only listens when you have food

Use food in training, but also use life rewards. Gradually reward every second or third correct response with food, and others with praise, play or sniffing.

Listens to one person but not others

Everyone in the family must use the same cues and rewards.



Why Didn't My Lab Respond?

When your Lab doesn't respond to a cue, ask these questions in order:

1. **Did they hear me?** Was it noisy, or were they far away?
2. **Do they understand the cue here?** Have you practised in this place before?
3. **Is the distraction too strong?** Could they still take a treat?
4. **Is the reward worth it?** What are they choosing instead?
5. **Are they over-excited, worried or tired?**
6. **Is something wrong physically?** A dog in pain may not want to sit or lie down.

The answer tells you what to change: get closer, practise somewhere easier, use a better reward, or wait until your Lab is calmer.



Fading the Treats

Once your Lab responds reliably, you can start to reduce food rewards. Do it slowly.

Step 1: Hide the Treats

Keep treats in your pouch or pocket, not in your hand. Your Lab should respond without seeing food.

Step 2: Reward Most, Not All

Reward 4 out of 5 correct responses with food. Use praise for the fifth.

Step 3: Mix the Rewards

Reward with food, praise, play, sniffing or a throw of the ball. Keep your Lab guessing.

Step 4: Pay More for Hard Things

Always use good rewards for difficult situations, like recall away from other dogs.

Step 5: Never Stop Completely

Keep rewarding some of the time, for life. Skills that are never rewarded fade away.

Proofing Games

These games make your Lab's skills strong in real life. Play one a day for 3–5 minutes.

Game 1: Sit Anywhere

Ask for a sit in 10 different places on one walk: by a bench, at a gate, on grass, on a path. Reward each one.



Proofing Games

Game 2: The Distraction Ladder

Ask for a sit with a toy on the floor. Then with a toy moving. Then with food in a bowl nearby. Then with someone walking past. Go up one step at a time.

Game 3: Red Light, Green Light Recall

Call your Lab, and as they run towards you, say "sit." Reward, then release them to come the rest of the way. This builds focus at speed.

Game 4: Wait for It

Ask your Lab to wait, then walk away a few steps, come back and reward. Build distance and time slowly.

Game 5: Name Game in the Park

Say your Lab's name once. Reward every time they look at you. Practise at a distance from other dogs and people first.



Your 21-Day Plan

- **Days 1–3:** listening assessment. Build your reward ladder. Agree cue words.
- **Days 4–7:** rebuild cues at home, saying each once.
- **Days 8–10:** the garden. Add distance and duration.
- **Days 11–14:** front of the house and quiet streets.
- **Days 15–18:** add distractions. Use life rewards.
- **Days 19–21:** practise at the park on a long line.



10 Popular Questions Answered

1. Is my Lab stubborn? Usually not. They're choosing what pays best right now.

2. Should I repeat the cue? No. Say it once, then make it easier next time.

3. When can I stop using treats? Gradually, once the skill is strong. Keep rewarding sometimes.

4. My Lab only listens at home. Practise in more places, step by step.

5. Why does my Lab ignore me when excited? It's hard to think when excited. Practise calm first.



10 Popular Questions Answered

6. Can an older Lab learn this? Yes. Labs learn at any age.

7. Should I use a stern voice? No. A happy voice works better.

8. What's the best reward? Whatever your Lab wants most at that moment.

9. Should I use a long line? Yes, for safe outdoor practice.

10. When should I get help? If you're not seeing progress after several weeks, a qualified trainer can help.



CHECKLIST

Your Quick Checklist

- ☐ Listening assessment done.
- ☐ Reward ladder written.
- ☐ One word per cue.
- ☐ Say it once.
- ☐ 5-Place Plan.
- ☐ Life rewards used.
- ☐ Long line for outdoor practice.



A Final Word



Your Lab isn't trying to be difficult. They're a clever, happy dog who'll do what works. Make listening the best choice, and you'll be amazed how quickly that "selective hearing" disappears.

