



The command “Come”

Attention to name

One of the foundations for good training is making sure your dog knows when you’re talking to them and getting them to focus on you. Remember dogs do not speak English and do not understand what our noises even mean! So let’s help them! Practice calling your pup by its name, as soon as their head turns say, GOOD DOG and show the treat. Wait for them to come and get it.

We are rewarding the movement of the head to turn sharply and look at you, but you will notice that your pup will come to you to get the treat. We are also building a foundation for COME. But don’t say COME yet...lets just practice calling your pup’s name and making a game out of it.

Try this with the whole family while watching TV. Simply say their name and give them a treat. All we are doing is teaching them that noise (their name) is fun and positive! Avoid using their name when angry at them. We want to keep it positive, we don’t want them running from you when you say their name!

Teaching the word: “COME”

Now that your dog knows its’ name and pays attention to you every time you call them you may have noticed that they are COMING when called and having fun doing it...So lets add the word “COME.” Come is forward motion towards you. And their name means pay attention. So in order to teach them the forward motion we can try a couple different steps:

Play a game:

Get the game started with the dog’s name and then add COME. For example: “Stella” (dog turns head), “GOOD GIRL,” “COME”, (Forward motion towards you) Reward. Try this with a friend, each of you call out the dogs name and the word COME, and have him/her run back and forth between you for a treat. Try it with three or four people and give treats to only two people to keep the dog guessing and begin fading out the use of the treat. It’s also a great idea to take hold of their collar before rewarding them. This is so their “Come” includes not just coming to you, but you taking hold of their collar as well. It also avoids them grabbing the treat from you and running off. Plus, it’s good for safety!

Back up:

If your dog is not coming towards you, grab its leash and back up while luring them with a treat. Say “Come” while doing this, and give them the treat when you stop. This is teaching them that forward motion towards you = that noise “Come”!

ALWAYS make it positive:

Right now it is VERY important to not make “Come” a negative command! This means you have to always reward them for coming. If you want to call them to go in their crate, make sure you reward them coming and then put them in the crate. Or if you want to leave the dog park, make sure to reward them for coming before putting their leash on to leave. Also keep in mind that being outside is going to be much more difficult than doing this inside. There are far more distractions outside than there are in your living room! This being said, once you brave the “come” game outside make sure to have REALLY

good rewards (hotdogs, cheese, a ball!). Your rewards must be better than the distractions. We also do not want your dog off leash outside until they are 90% at Come. This is because with everything that we do, we want to set them up to succeed (as well as the safety factor!)

Be Consistent:

It is a good idea to keep the leash on when working on this command. This will help you be more consistent. If your dog does not come to you, you should go over, grab the leash and back up while luring them. This way they don't get away with NOT coming when called. Also remember that no matter how long they take to come to you, DO NOT get angry! You must always reward them for coming no matter how long it took. Throw a party when they do! (If you don't have a food treat, use praise or throw a ball!) Next time they will want to come sooner because it was so much fun last time!

Extending and proofing “COME”

As humans, we train a little and expect a lot. For whatever reason we feel pretty strongly that dogs are stupid if they do not sit, stay or come. People often think that practicing ‘Come’ seven times on a Saturday afternoon and then again, two weeks later constitutes 100% knowledge of a command. Let us assure you it does not. It takes practice, patience and time to get *animals* to learn what *people* want. With that in mind, let us remember the rules of a good come:

- Never use anger
- Never end Come with a trip into the house, grab and scold, or ending fun
- Never chase

Dogs have their reasons for not coming when called, and mostly it is because they have learned that bad things happen (like anger or the end of all fun) when they do!

Practice with the word, COME – add more distance and more distraction. Keep your dog on a long line and go somewhere else: a pet store that allows pets, a long walk, and the beach. Try this same routine where the dog will be distracted by things that might also be on the list of rewards such as other dogs, squirrels or kids playing.

Here is where training often fails. We never want to practice with distractions and temptations all around. Your dog is an animal and that will never change. Squirrels, other dogs and great smells will always be very difficult to pass up unless the training has proven to be equally rewarding to the dog. Ask yourself, “Does your dog see you as a reward or the *ender of all fun and freedom?*”

Each day (if you practice and work through the tough parts) you will see your dog get better and better but remember, that training is never really over. Challenge your dog with new situations, new distractions and even fewer and fewer treats.

Your dog will test you. The minute you are inconsistent or change your behavior, they observe it and learn from it. So, if you have habits that you think contributed to the failure of your dogs ‘come’ command like; getting angry, chasing them, punishing them or repeating yourself, try to change *your* behavior. Positive reinforcement is a great tool for training any dog to do any thing.