



Come When Called

What is the picture of Come? Find my feet and sit, until I tell you otherwise.

How to train your dog to come:

Start practicing by calling your dog to you all throughout your day. Carry some of your dog's dinner kibble or freeze-dried liver in your pocket and call him to you when he's investigating the backyard, lounging in the other room, playing, etc. Keep training and practice fun by turning it into a game and throwing a party every time your dog comes to you.

Call your pup to you, have him sit for a few pieces of kibble and love upon arrival, and release him to go play. He will soon learn that coming when called is an enjoyable time-out, a little refreshment, a kind word, and a hug from you before he resumes play. Your dog will become confident that coming to you does not signal the end of fun.

When you call your dog, use the words "Fido, Come!" Do not call your dog over and over again, wearing his name out. Dogs are living and learning beings and make decisions just like us. If your spouse or child doesn't come to you right away, you don't just stand there and call their name over and over again. You go to them and give them your full attention. However, you must be prepared to back your command up. Every time you give your dog a command and allow him to blow you off, he learns your commands don't need to be followed. You must always follow through, no matter how long it takes.

One of the biggest reasons our dogs don't come to us is because they are distracted. Your challenge is to make yourself more interesting than a dead frog or another dog's butt! You must do things to distract your dog from whatever it is he is paying attention to. The best way to do this is to act like a fool! Make high pitched noises, clap your hands, kneel down, jump around, or pull out a squeaky toy. Do whatever it takes to make your dog think you're the coolest and most fun thing around.

Do not chase your dog. "Catch me if you can" is your puppy's favorite game and he will take advantage of it. Instead, draw your dog to you by backing up, bending over, and acting like a crazy fool. If you don't feel like a fool, you're not doing it right!

When practicing more advanced recalls with distance and distraction, you should attach a long line to your dog's collar. This will give you the ability to back up your command with leash guidance. If your dog has decided to practice selective hearing, simply step and grab a hold of the line. Start reeling your pup in, backing up, and acting like a fool. The second your dog starts coming to you, praise and reward!

Follow this sequence of events when practicing recalls:

1. Cue to Come- "Fido, Come!"
2. Prompt your dog to come: clap your hands, bend over, back up, lure with food, make high pitched noises, and act like a fool!
3. Dog begins to come
4. Praise your dog enthusiastically as he comes
5. Lure or wait for your dog to sit when he gets to you
6. Dog sits at your feet
7. Reward with treat or tug toy

How to train your dog NOT to come:

Sometimes we unintentionally teach our dogs not to come to us. We accidently teach our dogs that coming to us means bad things for them or we punish the wrong behavior.

Coming to you shouldn't always mean your dog's fun is over. Remember, dogs are expert observers of your body and routine. Asking your dog to come to only put him in a crate, give him a bath, or end an enjoyable romp in the park, teaches your dog only unpleasant things happen when you call him. Your dog will no longer be motivated to come. Instead, practice the recall just for the fun of it. It should end in fun more often than ending in something unpleasant.

When our dogs decide not to listen and initiate a game of "catch me if you can," we usually become irritated and proceed with our ugly face and ugly voice and scream "Bad dog! Come here!" Think about this situation from your dog's point of view: "I don't think so! I know that nasty tone and volume means you're not too happy. I think it would be mighty foolish of me to approach you right now. You're not in the right frame of mind to reward me appropriately." Instead, keep calm and make yourself more interesting and approachable. Now is the perfect time to act like a fool.

Most importantly, *never ever punish your dog for coming to you.* Even though it might have taken 10 minutes for your dog to finally come to you, you still must reward his behavior when he finally comes. You have 1.3 seconds to mark any behavior and to communicate to your dog if

you approve or not. When you say, “Bad dog!” when your dog finally approaches, you might be thinking you are punishing his disobedience but you are actually punishing the behavior of your dog coming and sitting in front of you.

Rules of the Recall:

You must graduate through levels of distractions before you can expect success when “big daddy” or college level distractions are present (other dogs, squirrels, poop). As with all your training, don’t expect too much too soon. Know your dog’s weaknesses and set him up for success. Obtaining a college level recall is an ongoing process that requires much practice. It takes months of consistent and timely reinforcement to train a dog to come to you off leash and under distraction. The off-leash recall is an advanced exercise.

Games and Exercises:

“Find my feet and sit” exercise:

1. Tie the leash to your waist
2. Call your dog to you
3. Take a few steps back
4. Lure your dog into a sit at your feet
5. Reward
6. Repeat, repeat, repeat

“Chase instinct” exercise:

1. Attach a long line to your dog’s collar
2. When your dog is not looking at you, run the opposite direction
3. Call your dog’s name and command him to come (“Fido, Come!”)
4. Make yourself interesting to get your dog’s attention and keep backing up
5. Lure into a sit
6. Reward

“Yo-Yo recall” game:

You and a helper call your dog back and forth between each other one at a time. Continue back and forth (like a yo-yo) from the kitchen to the living room, down a long hallway, from upstairs to downstairs, etc.

Generalization:

Be creative, but also be careful. Obviously, your dog is much faster than you. If he decides to split or go after one of your cleverly set up distractions, you may be in trouble. Here are some ideas just to get started:

1. Practice a recall past a piece of food on the floor.
2. Practice a recall past a friendly person

3. Practice a recall with another dog in a Down-Stay (also good generalization for the down).

Make sure to have a long line on your dog while you are going through the generalization process. Don't forget to make it the most fun game in the wide world and build on success!