

Come or Recall

Remember, your dog will only be as good as the time you invest in him!

This command can be labeled whatever you wish. Examples: Come, Here or Me.

****If at any time your dog has associated the command “Come” as negative or irrelevant – meaning that the word “Come” has no consequences and therefore has been taught to ignore that word – you must start fresh with a new Verbal Command, such as “Front” or “Here”.**

During your Basic Program you and your dog will be introduced to several attention exercises to prepare your dog for the Recall or Come command. During the next several weeks you will teach your dog that Coming to you is a positive experience. By the end of your Basic Program your dog will be able to pay close attention to you, love his name and come to you from the end of a twenty foot line. This is only the beginning to a Reliable Recall. To further his training a More Advanced Basic Program will be needed to accomplish Added Distance and Distractions, for a completely reliable dog.

Teaching your dog to Come when you call him has a great deal to do with the status of your relationship than anything else you’ve done up to this point. If your dog believes that you are in charge, he knows you control everything good and that he must check in with you often in order to have access to the things he wants, the recall or come command will come easily to your dog. If at any time you are unsure of your 100% leadership, please inform your trainer.

Never punish your dog for coming to you! You want your dog to think that coming to you is the best thing in the whole world. You want him to love running to you when you ask him to. To accomplish this, you need to make sure that Come is always associated as positive. No intimidation, anger or punishment should ever be associated with the cue for Come. Say the word in an upbeat, happy tone of voice, and make sure good things always happen when the dog arrives. “Have a Party!”

Think about his from the dog’s point of view. If you call her to you when it’s time to go home from the dog park or the beach, you actually punish her for coming to you by ending the fun. Other Examples: Your dog dislikes getting her nails trimmed, taking a bath, coming inside (ending the fun), going in her crate, being left inside when you leave for the day, taking something away from her, etc. It is very important to realize what your dog may even very slightly dislike. To avoid calling your dog to you and immediately doing something “bad”, I suggest having “A Party” for a minute – every time your dog comes to you. This will prevent your dog from ever associating you as bad or something immediately following as bad. You must break the association. Your dog is thinking “My owner just said come, I came and made me do something bad, and no way will I ever come to her again!” Come would then = bad.

Negative Example: If your boss were to only call your name across your office building in a mean nasty loud tone, usually when you have done something wrong and immediately reprimand or yell at you, would you come willingly and how fast would you get there? The same is for your dog.

Positive Example: If your boss were to give you \$10 and a compliment every time he called you into his office, would you come more willingly? Would you even stop by his office just to say hello and check in? If you only call your dog’s name in a happy, excited tone, to you for love, attention, treats, food, and of

course when you want him to actually COME, he will come more willingly. He will be expecting his actions of Coming to be Rewarding, in some sort of way. Remember if you call your dog's name and the Come command, be prepared to offer some sort of "Jackpot Reward" in the beginning. For a reliable response later on, I suggest rewarding 70% of the time. Due to this being such an important Command.

Teaching a Strong Foundation for Come or Recall Command

Method 1 – Receiving your dog's attention:

Before beginning to teach a Come or Recall command, your dog must be able to respond and pay close attention to you. Reward your dog any time he looks to you for guidance, responds to his name, or comes willingly to you for no reason. Continue using your "watch" cue and reward generously for attention.

Attention Exercises: Call your dog's name throughout the day. As soon as he looks to you, reward him generously. What you want to accomplish out of this exercise is "Good Name Recognition". Leading up to calling out your dog's name, and having a quick head turn in your direction. Remember to reward him any time he either willingly comes to you or in response to his name, comes running.

Method 2 – Recall Games:

Receiving the behavior before labeling it "Come or Here" is very important. You want your dog to willingly be coming to you reliably 90% of the time. With the use of Round Robin Recalls, Hallway Haven, and Hide and Seek, you can prepare your dog with fun and active games.

- Round Robin Recalls: Have your entire family sit on the floor in a large circle. Take turns calling your dog and then reward him with small handfuls of food or a favorite toy for his compliance. Just as he is Coming to you, "tell him what he is doing". Label it "Here or Come". Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.
- Hallway Haven: To ensure success, use a long hallway as a tunnel. One person will stand at one end while the other person stands at the other end. Take turns getting his attention and rewarding him with food or a toy. The dog has no option but run back and forth. He cannot veer off. Just as he is Coming to you, "tell him what he is doing". Label it "Here or Come". Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.
- Hide and Seek: Station two or more people in different rooms of the house and call your dog to go back and forth, rewarding him each and every time with either food or a fun game. Just as he is Coming to you, "tell him what he is doing". Label it "Here or Come". Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.

Method 3 – Chase Me on Leash:

This method is the easiest. The only rule is to avoid pulling on the leash to get your dog to come to you. This will only make your dog rely on leash pulling in order for him to come.

Exercise: Put your dog in a Sit. While walking slowly backward, encourage your dog to follow you, labeling his actions with the word "Come or Here" as he is coming to you, rewarding him along the way. Repeat this in several different places around your house. Be sure to check behind you first to avoid accidents.

Method 4 – Everyday Situations

Be aware of everyday situations in which your dog is already reliably “happily” coming to you.

Examples: Feeding time, going for a car ride, going for a walk or opening the door. Take advantage of these situations. Give your “Here or Come” command just as you begin any of these activities.

Come – Level 1

Begin within your home. A reliable Come or Here command outdoors takes a lot of persistence and consistent training. Remember “Dogs do what is most rewarding to them”. Example: your dog is outdoors and is having a wonderful time and discovers a rabbit. You say, “Sparky Come” and he acts as if he has never heard the word Come before. Ask yourself; am I or the rabbit more rewarding? Have you made yourself the best option or most rewarding - over a long period of time and training? This is typical if your dog hasn’t been formally taught to reliably come to you in such a distracting place. This type of situation would be your final goal. You must build up to such a challenging situation for your dog. The more you call your dog to you and he doesn’t respond to your Come command, he only learns that he doesn’t need to obey your command. You’re setting up your dog to start ignoring “Come”.

- Start with short distances until your dog is performing reliably 10 times in a row. Only then make your Come distances farther apart. Don’t move on until your dog is ready.
- Practice “come” games throughout your day. Do not say “come or here” to get your dog to come to you. They do not understand the verbal word quite yet. You want to label their behavior “as” they are coming to you. Example: Get Sparky’s attention. As he is running to you say “COME”, and treat generously when he arrives.
- Test your dog out in a few days. When your dog isn’t paying any attention, say “COME” without their name. If he comes, the verbal word is understood and your dog understands that coming to you must be a good idea. If your dog is not coming, keep labeling his behavior and having “a huge party” when he arrives. He must understand that coming to you is very, very rewarding.

Come – Level 2

- When your dog is reliably coming indoors, start adding some distractions. Have a partner hold a ball or a treat while standing half way in between you and your dog. Start with small distractions. When your dog is reliably coming to you 10 consecutive times reliably, you can add more challenging distractions.
- When your dog is reliable in the house with severe distractions being present – your dog is coming to you while running by a steak and choosing you instead – only then are you ready to challenge your dog outdoors. Start on a porch, a garage and progress to more challenging areas.
- Don’t progress too quickly. If at any time your dog is failing, go back one or two steps. If your dog is failing, he is not learning.