

Teaching your dog how to respond the first time, every time!

Know the Basics

COME When Called

What: Dog heads your direction and comes close enough to make contact with you.

Why: COME is a command that needs to work immediately to get your dog out of a dangerous situation, to get your dog to check in with you, and to catch your dog when they are off leash.

How: There are 4 main components to COME When Called.

First, COME needs to always be positive no matter what the dog was doing when you gave the command.

Second, make sure that the dog gets extra rewards when they respond, like a treat 'jackpot'.

Third, while your dog is still learning, only use the word COME when you know your dog will respond, like when they are on a long leash.

Fourth, if you have to call your dog and you are not sure if they will respond, use an informal command first like saying HERE, clapping or whistling.

Make it Fun

- Running Recall
 - Sometimes our dogs learn to tune us out when we say COME. It is our job to make Recall more exciting. Using a high pitched voice, whistling, clapping, crouching down to play, and patting the ground are all great ways to encourage your dog to come back. One of my favorite techniques though, is running away from them.
 - It seems counter-intuitive, but by running backwards or by turning and running the opposite direction, you are drawing the dog in like another puppy would. Think of puppies in the park playing the "Chase Game"; when one puppy frolics and romps around, often another puppy will run over to join in the fun. Also, think about pack mentality. If one dog goes over to check something out, usually the rest of the pack will join in to see what it is.
 - Get your puppies attention, then run away. As soon as your pup catches up, throw them a treat party!!
- Ping Pong Game
 - Our dogs need to learn how to respond to more than one person. Most households have multiple people interacting with the dog, so it is important for the dog to listen to all of them. Often, our dogs know who they need to listen to and who they can ignore. For their safety and for our sanity, it is good for everyone to practice the Ping Pong Game. Additionally, if your dog ever escapes, they will be much safer if someone else is able to catch them and hopefully bring them back home.
 - This game works whether you have two people, ten people, any number in between, or even more. Have everyone participating load up their treat pouch (or pocket) with treats. In the beginning, stand a couple feet apart with the dog in between. If the dog is exceptionally stubborn with recall or if you are in an unfenced area, you can put the dog on a long line or leash to help with control. Be sure not to use the leash unless the dog does not respond.
 - One at a time, call the dog by saying the dog's name first to get their attention then saying the word COME. When the dog comes over, say YES and give them a treat jackpot. Then,

- someone else calls the dog and repeats the process. Go in different orders so the dog can't predict the pattern.
- As the dog gets better, you can make the game more challenging. Have the dog COME then SIT before getting the treat to help prevent jumping. Space the participants farther apart so the dog has to travel farther in between treats. Play the game in new areas so the dog has to work on ignoring distractions. Have fun!
 - Check In Game
 - This game is the most important of the Recall Games. Usually, our dogs are bad at recall because they develop negative associations with COME. Think about when you most often call your dog. Is it when you want to leave the park? Is it when they are trying to chase something? Is it when they are doing something naughty? The Check In Game helps teach our dogs that not only is it a good thing to respond to COME but they also get to go right back to what they were doing before.
 - With this game, bring a large quantity of high value treats. Start in a distraction free zone like your living room, then as the dog gets better, gradually play in new places (especially places with lots of smells or distractions). Say your dog's name, then say COME, mark when they get to you, and jackpot reward. Then, release them to go play/sniff/sleep/etc. Wait about 10 seconds then do it again. I try to have my dog Check In 10-15 times every time I go to a new place. It doesn't matter the time length in between the Check Ins, but it is important that they follow through and get their treat every time.
 - Recall Races
 - Recall Races are fun when you have multiple handlers and multiple dogs. If, for example, you have 4 people and 2 dogs, set up 2 people (the catchers) at one end of the "raceway" and two people (the releasers) with their dogs at the other end. Count to 3, then the catchers say COME, the releasers let the dogs go, and the dogs get a treat jackpot for reaching their corresponding catcher. First dog to their human wins!
 - To make the game more challenging, instead of having a releaser hold the dog back, have the catcher put the dog in a sit/down stay, walk to the other end of the raceway, then call the dog. Work on Recall Races in a variety of places at various distances to help improve speed and responsiveness. If the dog is exceptionally stubborn with recall or if you are in an unfenced area, you can put the dog on a long line or leash to help with control. Additionally, you can have the releaser run behind the dog holding the long line to avoid losing the dog to a distraction or to a play session with their rival racer.