



## **The “Come” Command**

One of the most common problems owners have with their dog is getting them to come back on command. It takes time, consistency and patience to have a dog that will come back reliably when off leash, but it can happen! Follow these steps to help get your dog coming back to you happily.

### **What you will need**

Fantastic treats (cheese, hotdogs, boiled chicken)

A favorite toy (if your dog is toy motivated)

A 20 ft leash or rope

A squeaker or whistle (if needed to get attention)

A consistent command and hand signal for the recall (come, here, front)

### **Things to remember**

- ✓ When you call your dog to “come” and he reaches you, as you give him a treat from one hand, gently take his collar in the other hand and say “gotcha.” This helps your dog not avoid coming too close to you and shying away.
- ✓ Never call your dog to come to do something negative, go and GET him!
- ✓ Having your dog hungry when you work on the “come” command is very helpful.
- ✓ If every time you call your dog he ends up leashed and leaving the park or playtime, he won’t want to come back at all. If every 1 in 20 times you call him he actually has to leave, it makes him much happier to come back to you when called. This means you should call your dog to come to you, reward him, and then immediately release him back to play several times before you call him and finally leave.
- ✓ Never call your dog to come if you know it is not going to happen. Wait until he is less distracted and you are more exciting.
- ✓ Never punish your dog for finally coming to you; even if it took 20 minutes, he still came back!
- ✓ Make yourself interesting!! Turn and clap your hands while running, bend down and face away, or use a squeaker to get your dogs attention and have him flying back to you!
- ✓ Your dog turning and looking at you is the first step towards him starting back, verbally reward your dog when he starts your way, and encourage him to keep going!

- ✓ Distance Duration Distraction - When teaching the come command, you have to build your dog up from scratch. Adding in a new D as you go will help your dog learn at a slow pace and set you and your dog up for success.

### **Step 1**

Round Robins – start doing round robins with your dog in the house or an area with little distractions. It should be in a safe, enclosed area, a hallway for example. Get some yummy treats and call your dog to “come” in a happy excited tone of voice. If there are two of you, have one call the dog and the other reward, and then vice versa! When your dog reaches you, say “YES” “Gotcha” and give him a treat. Then repeat this a couple more times and end the game with your dog desperate for more. Do this exercise a couple of times a day and give your dog mini pop quizzes when he is relaxed or doing something else.

### **Step 2**

Once your dog is 100% reliable with you in an area free of distractions, it is time to up the ante! This phase of the training is very important and it is the stage that is left out most of the time. Begin with your dog on your long leash or rope and go to an area that he is familiar with but there are distractions. A local park, field, or empty parking lot is fine.

Let your dog explore the area and let the leash go with him. When he is about at the end of the leash but it is still slack, call your dog to “come” (remember to make yourself interesting and to sound excited) your dog should hopefully turn around and start heading in your direction. If he doesn’t call him again once more, staying happy and excited, and if he still doesn’t come, use the leash to tug him gently and move him slightly back to you. Once he takes a couple of steps, get really happy and reward him as soon as he reaches you with “YES Gotcha”! Then release him (still leashed) to go back and play with “Okay, go play!” Repeat this exercise a few times before going home, and end it with your dog still wanting more.

As your dog gets better take him to areas with even higher distractions and work with him there. This stage should be repeated many many times before finally unleashing your dog. You should feel very confident in your dog’s recall before letting him off leash for the first time!

### **Step 3**

Many dogs remain in step 2 for a long time before they are allowed off leash in a high distraction area. When you have reached step 3, it is still important to start slow and make sure your dog is reliable. Start in large fenced in parks and let your dog off leash. One he is about 10 feet away, call him back to come and reward him. Then go from there. Have a whistle or squeaker on you to get your dogs attention from a distance and reward your dog heavily for coming back to you when called. If you find your dog is still not coming back, continue more step 2.

It’s important to remember that no dog is ever 100% reliable on recall. You can get close, but things happen sometimes that we cannot control. Set your dog up for

success by making sure he is well trained before unleashing him in areas that could pose as a danger to his safety.