

Tips for Getting your Dog to Come to You – Every Time You Call!

By *AKC Staff*

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“Come” is the most important word that you will teach your dog, and if it is trained using positive reinforcement and play, you are more likely to have a successful, reliable recall. Maintaining a solid recall is a lifelong training effort that includes enthusiasm, consistency, and most importantly, rewards – lots and lots of rewards!

Before You Begin:

Never use your recall cue to call your dog to you for something negative, such as a reprimand, isolation, to get their nails clipped, or anything else your dog finds to be negative. Always make sure it is fun and positive every time they run to you.

If you have inadvertently already been calling your dog for things that he or she considers unpleasant, then just change your command and start training all over so your dog learns that coming to you is the best thing in the world! So, if you need to get your dog for something he considers unpleasant (such as a bath or nail trim), do not use your “come” command – just go get the puppy without associating a word with it.

Teaching the Recall:

Start slowly by practicing at home with minimal distractions and plenty of fun or yummy rewards, like toys and treats. First, show your dog a high-value treat as you move backwards and say the dog’s name in a bright, happy tone. If the puppy runs straight to you, reward with several small treats.

Be very exciting and make the puppy understand what great fun it is to run to you. As he comes to you, give him several treats AND praise AND petting AND play. Once your dog is running consistently straight to you, you can name the behavior (come, here, etc.). thing and not something to run away from and avoid.

When going outside to practice, there will be more distractions, so always keep your dog on a leash or safety long line until he has been trained more thoroughly, and don’t forget to use high value treats!

Collar Grabs:

Practice grabbing your dog’s collar when he comes to you, just before you give him the treat. This will avoid your dog taking the treat and run away to play the game again. It will also make your dog associate a “collar grab” with a good thing and not something to run away from and avoid.

Reinforcing the Recall:

The key to success is building a great relationship with your dog. You must try to be “Be the Very Best, Most Interesting Human Ever in the History of the Entire World” each and every time you call your dog to come.

Also remember to never, ever reprimand your dog after you ask them to come to you! This rule applies to every recall and means that no matter how many times you call or how long it takes for your dog to get to you, he gets huge rewards once he gets to you.

Have your dog randomly check in with you many times while at play, especially with other dogs. Just call them to you, give them a treat and then release them back to play. That way, “come!” is not associated with leaving or being leashed.

For more advice on teaching your dog to come, watch the video below.

Want your Dog To Come When Called? Play a Game



Like young children, dogs often learn best when playing games and having fun. Playing is not only fun for you both, but you can also use games for training and reinforcing important behaviors, like “Come.” Remember to keep your recall command happy and light, not an authoritative tone.

Here are a few games to help strengthen your dog’s recall while bonding and playing with you.

Go & Come: A great game for speedy recalls is the “Go & Come” game. For this, you will need two types of treats, a low value treat like kibble, and a high value treat like small bits of cheese or meat. Toss a low value treat away from you and tell your dog to go get it. When he has nearly finished the treat, call him to “Come” in an excited voice and reward him with praise and a high value treat when he returns to you.

Hide & Seek: This is a great game for children to get involved in training the family dog. Have your dog sit/stay in one room or have someone hold your dog. Go hide somewhere obvious (or ask your child to hide somewhere obvious), like partially behind furniture or around a corner. Call your dog to come find you. When he finds you, reward with petting, praise and a treat. As your dog learns the game, the hiding spots can become more challenging.

Catch Me If You Can: Dogs love to play chase and a great way to get your dog excited about running to you is let them chase you. BUT NEVER CHASE YOUR DOG, not even for this game. To play “Catch Me If You Can,” get your dog’s attention and then run in the opposite direction making fun sounds and excited gestures to get your dog to chase you. When he “catches” you, make a big party with petting, praise, treats and toys.

Relay Races: Get the family involved by having some relay races. This is easy to do in a hall way or in a fenced in yard. One person holds the puppy. The other person goes a few feet away and calls the puppy, rewarding them with several treats when the pup comes. Then the other person calls, also rewarding with several treats. Slowly increase the distance between you and the other person as your dog gets faster.

Recall Retrieve: If your dog *loves* fetch, this is a perfect opportunity to practice! Just throw the ball or other retrieve object, as your dog is running toward you to return the ball, say “Come.” Have him give you the ball and repeat. If your dog is reluctant to give you the ball or toy, switch him off for a treat or second toy. The next retrieve is often the best reward in itself!