

Dog Training by PJ
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How to Teach a Reliable Recall / Come

Come also known, as the recall is a cue that could some day give your dog the freedom of off-leash play or save your dog's life. However, if your dog doesn't come when called it is a nuisance to other dogs and to people, a threat to wildlife and livestock and is at a high risk for ending up in a shelter or worse, being run over by a car, shot, poisoned or stolen.

Therefore, it is fundamentally important to motivate your dog to want to come to you. **NEVER** call your dog to you in order to be punished. No intimidation, anger or punishment should ever be associated with the cue for COME.

HOW TO BEGIN:

- Begin practice in an area without any distractions.
- Do 6 inch "in your face to face" recalls - get the behavior moving toward you to mean "come" not run away as many owners have already made the association with the word "come" means run away as fast as you can!
- Reward for every time you use the word "come."
- Take a small piece of very yummy treat and wave it under your dog's nose, quickly step back. Use your dog's desire to eat and chase you, and capitalize on his attachment and interest in you.
- Now run away about ten feet and sit down, squat and invite your dog—happy voice.
- When your dog arrives, jackpot (two-three pea-sized treats delivered in succession of each other—not a hand full of treats) the dog for the come Ask the dog to sit, reward again and playfully grab your dog's collar.
- ***Research has demonstrated that dogs are naturally attracted by some auditory signals more than others and of course VISUAL (sight) trumps VOICE (acoustics) so be inviting. Jump around, be playful! Dogs typically greet one another head on - usually it is side to side or with a curve around - - so be patient - puppy may not run directly in a straight line to you.***

- **REMINDER:** If you call your puppy to you when it is time to go home from the dog park, beach, or other fun place you are actually punishing him for coming to you by ending the fun.
- You can also use other strategies to invite your puppy away from play when it's time to leave. Bounce a ball or squeak a toy! Be creative and while teaching this behavior **REWARD!**
- **PRACTICE COME** - *Practice three to five times a day for approximately 5 minutes each session.*
- Hallways at home are a great place to begin. Have someone hold the puppy gently, run away, face your puppy, get his attention, and say, "your puppy's name - COME!" in a very bright, inviting tone of voice.
- Practice this behavior from all different locations.
- Be sure all family members practice this COME with the puppy, each calling and rewarding puppy when the puppy COMES.
- Play games for a good come; do round robin calling your puppy from various corners of a room.
- Always reward first, then sit, then playfully grab collar.
- Expand to other rooms. Before changing locations get a great response to come before changing the conditions and surroundings.
- When dog is doing a great come indoors you are ready to move outdoors in a controlled (fenced) area.
- Meanwhile, indoors, add distractions while asking the dog to come. An example may be the cat moving across room, a bouncing ball, the refrigerator opening, a knock on the door, dogs playing, toys all over the floor, etc.
- As puppy gets more reliable with the COME begin to use different motivators (reinforcers -see your list) to reward when he comes to you. Your puppy should go 'YIPEE' over these things. Be sure to vary your body position. Some times call your puppy when she/he starts come, you run away so she/he can chase you. Be unpredictable.

NOW MAKE A LIST: of situations, things, places, toys, other animals, food, etc., that your puppy finds distracting, to the point of not listening to you. *Refer to Possible Distractions below.* Rate these distractions on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most distracting to your puppy. Now, for the next week, make a point to have your dog on a long-line (15-30 feet) at all times when they are around anything that are a "2" or greater. For the first two - three months you are going to avoid any "10" distractions. You will not permit your puppy freedom to choose not to come

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to you. This may mean keeping your puppy on a leash or long-line for the duration period or until you have full confidence that you have "proofed" his recall.

POSSIBLE DISTRACTIONS FOR YOUR COME OR RECALL

1. Dog park with other dogs playing
2. Door bell ringing
3. Dogs in crates near by
4. People or dogs walking - on or off lead
5. Children playing or just being around
6. Squealing children
7. Food in containers on the chair
8. Food in containers on the floor
9. Food scattered on the floor
10. Squirrels running or not
11. A cat running by or standing nearby
12. The opportunity to swim (water is nearby)
13. A delivery person walking past
14. Balls being thrown or rolled past
15. Eating things off the ground (goose, horse poop)
16. Good smells on the ground, trees, and bushes
17. Rabbits hopping or standing
18. Deer or other wildlife moving or standing
19. Bicyclists
20. People on roller-blades or skateboarders
21. Another pet playing outdoors or indoors
22. Another family member walking away
23. Another family member feeding another pet
24. Obstacles in the way
25. Puppy play groups
26. Toys scattered on the ground
27. New environment, friends backyard, different park, trail
28. Full dinner bowl on floor
29. Empty dinner bowl on floor
30. Opening a door, front, back
31. Opening a gate, garage door

32. Sending them part way for a retrieve and calling them back
33. A thrown object, Frisbee, ball, disc, in the air
34. Other _____

As the weeks, months progress add a few of the distractions that you have rated "1" on your distraction list. Call the puppy once. If your dog chooses the distraction over you, score *one for them*, score a *minus 20 for you*. You will then need to execute at least 20 additional **successful** recalls before you can progress with the next level. By the end of the week, your puppy should be successful with distractions of a "2" or lower.

Remember if your puppy does not come with one cue at any time during the session, you need to lower your criteria. You may need to adjust your ranking of distractions. You may need to get closer (2-3 feet) to your puppy if you are working with distractions and you may need to get more attractive treats/rewards. Progress on the ranking chart slowly - don't go too fast. You should take at least 3 months, doing an average of 20 recalls per training session, 3 times a day, 7 days a week - see where you can go.

If your puppy has a history of not coming when called you may need to extend this program. Be patient and methodical and **DO NOT ALLOW YOUR DOG OFF LEASH FREEDOM** until you have a recall every time. *One runaway or drive by* can undo all that practice. Be diligent. You may not have thought of every distraction - but the more you practice with the distractions you list - the more likely a successful recall will occur.

A Dog Training by P.J. Tip: The better we as humans understand how puppies learn, the better we will become at teaching them acceptable behaviors and not allowing unwanted behaviors to manifest into something terrible. It takes knowledge and work to develop your puppy's potential. Education may be for a period of time, but learning is a life-long process. What you teach your puppy or dog now will last your dog's lifetime...10-20 years!

Still having trouble? Join the Perfect Recall - Come class at Dog Training by PJ.