



Teaching Your Dog To “Come”

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Definition

“Come to me.”

Practical Uses

A matter of safety and convenience, “come” may be the most important command you teach your dog.

How to Teach “Come”

With your dog a short distance away and on-leash (or off-leash in a small, confined area), call your dog's name. Use a very positive, happy voice, bend forward and pat your thigh, or get down on your knees and pat the floor. As soon as he looks at you, *click. When he comes to you to get his treat, gently take his collar in one hand while you pop the treat in his mouth with the other and praise him. When your dog is reliably coming to you when you get his attention, even when there are a few distractions, add the cue “come” or “here.” Say, “Duffy come,” and click when he starts to come toward you. Gradually increase the number of steps Duffy is required to take toward you before you click. Do this until your click is happening when he gets all the way to you.

Comments

It may help you to have a partner hold your dog loosely while you get into position, then release him when you call.

Any word can be used to mean “come to me” as long as you're consistent. If you've been using “come” and your dog regularly ignores you, try a new word like “here.”

Have a really good treat and lots of enthusiastic praise for your dog *every time* he comes for at least the first six months that you work on the behavior. Take hold of the dog's collar with one hand as you reward him from the other hand every time he comes. This prevents the dog from playing “keep away” and accustoms him to being grabbed by the collar.

Remember that coming to you must **ALWAYS** result in something positive. If you call your dog to scold or punish him, he will think he is being punished for coming and will not want to come the next time you call him.

Do **NOT** yell “come” at your dog when he is on the other side of the yard. If you call and call and your dog does not respond, you are teaching him to ignore you.

If your dog doesn't come when you give the cue, don't click or give him a treat. Go back to clicking whenever he looks at you (without the cue “come”) and let him come to you for the treat. Try to make yourself more interesting with treats, a high-pitched voice, smiles, etc., so he will come on his own the next time. Wait until he reliably comes to you when you call him before you again add the cue “come.”

Off-leash practice should only be done in a confined area, indoors or in a fenced yard, and only when your dog is coming consistently and reliably on-leash.

Another Way to Teach

While out walking your dog on a leash, in a happy voice say, “Duffy come,” *while you quickly back away*, enticing him to come toward you. As soon as he has come a few steps, stop and click, touch his collar and reward him with the treat and praise. You can do this many times while you're out on a walk. Gradually progress to giving the cue when he is distracted by something else, such as another dog walking by or a squirrel.

*If you are not using a clicker, you may use a word such as “Yes!” to mark the correct behavior.