

"Come" Problems

For the safety of the dog, but more importantly the safety of the child, this is, by far, the most important thing you can teach your dog! If the dog is in a dangerous situation, or location, and will not "come" when called, the child is likely to follow into the same situation. Note that the dog should come reliably to anyone that they know, not just the trainer, or ultimately the child.

If there is the slightest problem with this command, we need to switch to a dual recall training methodology. The ideal situation in training for any desired behavior is that we insure that the dog is 100% successful when the command is given. I.e. before issuing the command, we must be sure that we have a way to insure that there will be compliance. In the case of the "come" command that insurance could be a full dinner bowl in your hand, or an irresistible toy, or a retrieval rope in your hand, etc. In our day-to-day activities, this is very often not practical. Therefore, we need to have two commands for the same desired result. For this case, we will use "come" as the primary command and "here" as the secondary command.

This takes a lot of discipline on your part, but for a period of time (probably a month, or more), you must consciously use the primary command only when you are sure of compliance. Use the secondary command any time that you cannot be certain of compliance. For example, if the dog has picked up something that they shouldn't have, and you are not sure they will come to give it to you, use the "here" command until you are in a position to grab their leash, or have an irresistible treat in your hand. Then use the "come" command. Of course, the best of all worlds is for the dog to become completely reliable for either command, but don't compromise the "come" response to achieve that goal.

I have had the best success when I reserve the "come" command for situations where I have intentionally "set-up" the dog for success. A good start is meal time. Put the dog in a "down", "stay", as far away as practical. Then with bowl, in hand, say "come", "Sit". Now proceed with the routine "wait", "OK" routine. This can be used occasionally for just a special treat.

You will want to get your dog accustomed to a trailing tether. I use about 20 feet of clothes line rope. Yes, the dog will play with it and maybe chew it up, but it is easy enough to tie a knot to repair it. When they become accustomed, you can set them up. No matter what they are doing, casually grab the end of the rope and issue the "come" command. If they don't promptly respond, reel them in, followed by lavish praise - treats are OK to start with. You should also use negative set-ups. I.e., if there is something they shouldn't have, or do, set them up by giving them an opportunity and then using "come" to get them away from it. Good examples of lures are other dogs, or slippers they like to chew, or even a desirable treat on the floor. In the latter case, I would definitely have a treat, of equivalent value, in my hand to give them when they come to you.

You will want to involve other family members, friends, etc. in this, as the dog must learn to come reliably to any one they know. To graduate from this program they must come reliably to me, to other family members and ultimately reliably to their child.

It takes patience and hard work, but the end result is worth it. **It could save a child's life!**

Commented [JG1]: