

# MY DOG WONT COME BACK!

*This information is intended as a general guide only.*

## **Why do some dogs refuse to come back?**

Dogs don't come back because whatever it is they are doing is much more rewarding than coming back to you - simple as that. You need to change that so for your dog, coming when he's called is a command worth obeying!

## **"Come" is one of the most important things you can teach your dog!**

Dogs learn to repeat activities that are rewarding, and avoid activities that are punishing. Do you call your dog to come at the off leash park so you can take it home? Look at it from his perspective - ending all the fun of playing and sniffing in the park is a form of punishment in the dog's eyes. Many people unknowingly punish their dogs for coming when called. Do you call "come" and then shove a pill down its throat, cut his toenails or give it an unwelcome bath? Do you call your dog repeatedly and when it finally wanders over, grab it and yell at it for being slow or running away? The dog thinks it is being punished for coming to you - the most recent thing it did - not for ignoring the first few commands, which it did some time ago.

## **There are TWO secrets to teaching a reliable "come"**

1. ALWAYS make coming to you pleasant
2. ALWAYS make sure the dog will come on the first command.( which often means you need to set yourself and you r dog up for success.

## **Making coming to you pleasant**

Start by teaching come-for-dinner. Dinner is usually a very pleasant experience for a dog! Every time you feed the dog, have someone hold it a distance away from you and the food. When you call "come" in a cheerful voice, they let go. When the dog arrives, give it dinner immediately. You could even extend this exercise by having each person give the dog portions of the dinner- holding the dog until the other person calls "come".

- Another way to make coming to you pleasant is to praise the dog the moment it starts to come to you (even if you had to help to get it started.)
- When the dog does arrive, give it something it really wants (more praise, patting, food treat, ball or other toy) immediately when it gets to you.
- You can also make coming to you pleasant by releasing the dog to go and play again.
- Use a happy tone to call the dog, and always praise on the way in.

- For a small, young or timid dog, crouch down to make yourself less frightening for it to approach. Don't lean over it, grab at or manhandle a dog that has come most of the way to you, or it will learn that coming within arm's reach is unpleasant.
- Play recall games up and down a hallway, then from room to room within a house. Call the dog from one family member to another, each giving the dog a treat when it comes to you.
- Use the treats or toys the dog loves BEST for rewarding your dog for coming to you. Use the treats as rewards after they come to you, not lures before the fact. That is, don't show the dog the food or toy BEFORE or as you are calling.(except maybe the very first few times). Instead, get the dog to come, then produce the reward immediately after the dog arrives.

### **Make sure the dog comes**

The "come" cannot be taught to a dog that is off lead and distracted (e.g. sniffing or playing with other dogs at the park) - the owner simply gets hoarse and frustrated from fruitless calling and the dog learns that it is safe to ignore the owner. Don't call "come" at the park or off leash until you are sure the dog will comply.

Coming to you must be taught in gradual, successful increments.

### **Successful ways to practice**

1. Start in a quiet place such as your back yard;

- Walk along with the dog on lead, either a short one, or a long retractable one.
- Get your dog's attention. ( Make a noise, shake the lead, say the dog's name)
- Run backwards a few steps while calling "COME" in a cheerful, inviting but definite tone of voice. If necessary, give a light tug on the lead to get the dog turned toward you and coming in.
- Praise all the way in, reward, then resume walking.
- Repeat 10 - 20 times around the back yard

2. On your daily walk practice the same routine

3. Plan a graduated series of more and more distracting environments in which to call your dog, help it come and be rewarded. For example, try in a neighbour's yard, or a fenced in tennis court before moving on to a dog park.

4. At the park;

- Let the dog sniff around on the long lead, get its attention, call it, praise it and then release it to explore on the long lead again.
- Repeat many times
- Gradually increase the level of distraction (e.g. let it play with another dog,) still on a long lead then make sure your dog comes when you call

5. If you are having success on the long lead, graduate to a long light rope. PLEASE don't sabotage your progress by moving to a situation where your dog can go back to ignoring you!!!!

6. At the park on the light, long (approx.10 m) rope, follow the same steps;

- Get attention first, call "come", tug on lead/rope if necessary, praise, reward, release.

**Points to remember:**

While you are teaching your dog to come to you, NEVER call it when you are not in a position to help it comply. If the dog is running loose and not likely to respond to your call, KEEP SILENT or you will undo a lot of your training.

One way to attract a loose dog without calling is to turn your back on it and run away, then perhaps squat down with your back to the dog and pretend you've found something fascinating on the ground. When the dog wanders over to see what you've got, give it a bunch of interesting treats and catch it in a pleasant and low key way so there is no punishment associated with coming to you.

Now ask yourself why let your dog run without dragging a light line, in a situation you couldn't control.

After you've graduated from the retracting lead and light line, if at any time the dog should ignore a "come" command, GO GET IT. Do not allow the dog to ignore you.

Continue to praise and reward successful recalls, though you can gradually cut down and reward every now and then, instead of every time.