

## I Said Come!

Ever wonder why when you call your dog, they never actually come over to you? It can be very frustrating to an owner when their dog just looks at them and turns the other way, or comes almost within reach and then runs away again. Think back to when you got your dog. Did you ever use the word “Come”, or what ever word you use to call your dog, and then punish them or groom them or do something else to them that they did not like? That could be the reason your beloved pet does not like to get near you when they are called!

Having a dog that comes when called can be a life saving thing. It is also useful in many circumstances. When you are late for an appointment and your dog thinks it would be fun to spend time trying to get that squirrel out of the tree, it would be nice to get them to leave the tree and come inside without you having to walk through a muddy yard to go and get them. A solid recall is one of the best ways to make sure your dog will come and not run in front of the car they are headed for.

So, how do you change this behavior? Let’s start at the beginning. Is your dog food motivated? If so, take a handful of tiny treats (don’t use large dog biscuits) and keep them in your pocket whenever your dog is around. You will want to subtract the amount of treats you are using from their food so that you don’t end up with a really fat dog, which can be a big problem in it’s self. If treats are not something your dog craves what about chicken, hotdog, or liver? Using petting as praise, can work very well also. If your dog is clicker trained, that is another possibility. For the rest of this article, treat means what ever motivates your dog.

Now that you have the motivation, every time your dog looks at you, give them their treat. This may seem silly, but you are setting up the groundwork for a solid recall. Don’t go overboard with this. Use the treats often enough in different circumstances, that the dog gets the idea that paying attention to you is very rewarding.

Once they begin to understand that you are now a human treat dispenser, try giving treats only when you say your dog’s name. Give this a month or so where once you have them running to you every time you say “Fido”, choose a new word for COME. You have already used that word to mean so many thing, and some of them bad, that your dog will not pay much attention to it. For the rest of this article, I will use RECALL as the replacement for COME. Make sure your recall word is not something you use every day when talking to your friends and family.

Your dog now comes whenever you say their name because they know a treat is going to be handed to them. Next add in RECALL. Don’t do this when there are a ton of distractions, use it when you are alone with your dog. Just use the RECALL and get the dog to come to you every time you say it. If they don’t come, just ignore them and don’t offer the treat. With patience, your dog will soon be coming every time they hear RECALL!

Author: Diane R Mitchell

Originally Published in GPSSC Der Schnurrbart Fall 2007