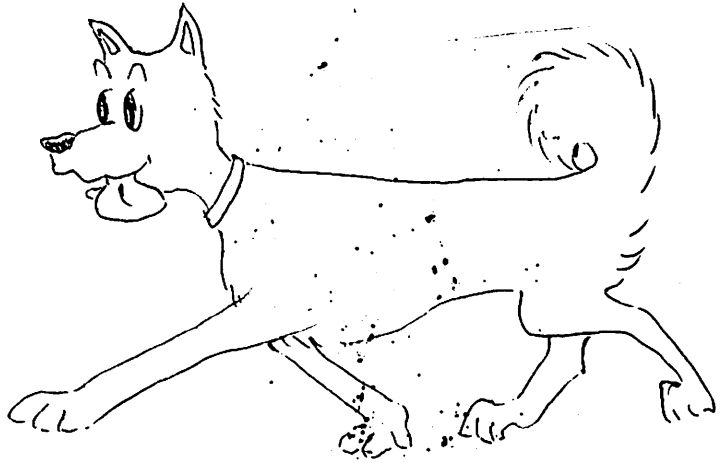


TEACHING THE COMMAND COME

by Terena Thomas

****When training over a period of time regress a step or two at the beginning of each session from where you ended up the last training session to help the dog remember what you want and to build their confidence****

1. The recall or come should be looked at as if it were a gigantic, energetic, fun game. You need to be more fun to come to than anything out there that the dog would want. That means the dog should want to come to you because you are more fun and rewarding than the squirrel in the tree or the other dog across the street. If you EVER want your dog to be able to come when he's off the leash he must NEVER be off the leash for the first year of his life. If you've already made that mistake and you've let him run free then you must make the commitment now to not allow him to be out of your control at all within the next year, possibly for longer depending on how often you allowed him off leash and how old he is.



People generally make the assumption that the dog needs to run free but all it teaches them is independence and keep away. You need a dog for companionship and safety. When he's 40 feet from you he is accomplishing neither of those things you got him for and you are just encouraging him to run.

2. To start a recall program successfully he must first learn to come to you in the house. This is fun and easy and everyone in the family can participate. Everyone needs to have a handful of treats and be in the same room. The caller should raise his voice and call the dog very loudly and excitedly. 'Fido come'. As soon as the dog even begins looking in the caller's direction praise him and get down on one knee. When the dog reaches the caller grab the dog's collar and pet and praise THEN treat. It is very important to touch the dog and make the collar contact before treating so the dog never learns to quickly grab the treat and take off again. PRAISE PRAISE PRAISE. Remember he needs more positive reinforcement for coming to you than he would ever get from chasing cars or cats. Can you be more fun than that? Yes remember to raise your voice to a higher pitch and talk quickly and energetically. Touch him and rub him and treat him tons. Quiet down so the other callers in the room get a chance to try the recall. Do this for 1 whole week gradually spreading out to a maximum of three rooms. He should be called periodically throughout the day and evening for a total of 10 recalls per day.

3. Be sure to never call him and punish him for anything. Doing this one time will forever damage the recall. ANYTIME you call him and he comes you need to treat him as if he just saved you from a burning building. By continually reinforcing how wonderful it is that he comes to you he will never have second thoughts about coming to you.

4. For the second week of recall training continue to call and praise. Expand your coverage area to the limits of your whole house. Call him from different rooms, from different floors and by different people. He will not only learn to listen to where you are but he'll also learn to seek you out which comes in handy if you have young children which are prone to wondering. Do this 10 times daily for a week.

5. Your dog is now ready to try it outside if he comes 100% of the time in the house (if he can't do it in the house you're just setting him up for failure to try it outside). Use a small confined area with few distractions. Your yard is ideal but in the event you don't have a yard go to your nearest baseball diamond that's not in use. Have a long line on him so you are able to reinforce the come if he chooses not to come (which he will probably do the first couple of times you try this). Have the end of the long line in your hand and call him. 'Fido Come'. Praise him if he even looks in your direction and drop to one knee. If he chooses not to come gently tug on the line and get his attention. Praise him when he starts in your direction but continue to reel in the line in the event he gets distracted on his way to you. PRAISE PRAISE PRAISE. Be sure to grab the collar and pet him before treating him. Do this 10-15 times daily for a week. Gradually increase the distraction in the yard during the week with children playing, other animals wandering around, boys playing ball... whatever, get creative. When your pooch is confident in what is expected of him with a lot of distractions in the yard or small confined area you are ready to move to step 6.

6. In a confined area remove the line and continue recall practice. In the event your puppy does not come you must chase them down (do not yell at them or tell them they are bad) and with your hand firmly on the collar take them back to the exact spot you called them. Follow with praise but no goodies. Let your dog go and immediately ask him to come. If he comes give him twice the loving you normally would and three times the amount of cookies. If he doesn't come go back to step 5 and practice for at least another month he's letting you know you've

advanced him too quickly.

7. In new areas continue to practice recalls either with the line on or in closely confined areas for the next couple of months. When he has come every time you have called him for 6 months he's ready for step 8.

8. Do NOT rush this step. In doing so you may have to start completely over so it is better to wait too long before jumping to this step than not waiting enough time. After his first birthday and several months of practice take him to a designated dog training area (like at Chatfield). Do several recalls on line. If he has 1 unsuccessful recall he's not ready. Next let him off the line and call him. If he comes treat him as if he just pulled your entire family out of the burning building and consider yourself done with the training. ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS praise and treat for a recall. If he doesn't come go back to step 5 and progress much slower.

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****The Canine Country School is not responsible for any behavior problems you may experience with your dog****