

Teaching Your Dog to Come by Playing Hide and Seek

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STAGE ONE

Of all the things your dog learns, learning to come when called, the first time, every time is one of the most important for the comfort and safety of you and your dog. With a good, reliable recall, you can allow your dog to be off leash at appropriate places. You can stop your dog from doing inappropriate things with a simple, cheery Come. Your community will thank you.

HOME EXERCISES

Start in a familiar environment with little or no distraction. The behavior is more likely to occur when the dog has less to see and think about.

1. Start in the same room with your dog on a leash. Face your dog. Say **Come** in a cheery voice while backing away 5 or 6 steps. Clap your hands and chat happily to keep your dog's attention on you. Immediately offer a food reward as soon as your dog arrives. Repeat 3 to 4 times several times a day. **DO NOT** put your dog on a stay before calling and do not ask for a sit when your dog arrives. This is the shaping stage and it's not time to drill your dog. This should be a game your dog always wins by coming right away.

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2. After a day or two of calling your dog on the leash, start to vary the distance and make calling more spontaneous. Always be prepared with a treat.

3. When you see that your dog consistently comes, off leash, when you are in the same room, go further away and even out of sight and call your dog. Always be prepared for with a treat or toy and don't put your dog on a stay.

4. Start to play hide and seek with your dog. When you are in other rooms of your house, hide but make yourself easy to find and follow the same steps as in number 1. You can increase the difficulty in very small steps but always be willing to go back to the step before if you experience failure.

That's all for the first stage of teaching Come. Avoid using your dog's name or the word Come when you are calling your dog outdoors or in a distracting environment or when you do not have a leash on him/her.

When this stage is reliable at a moderately high level of difficulty, you can start going outside with your dog on a twenty to thirty foot long line. It's easy to hide when your dog is not paying attention to you and he or she will have a great time finding you and getting rewarded with a food treat or a favorite game. Hide and Seek may become your dog's favorite game.

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