

# Come

## **Purpose:**

The Come exercise teaches your dog to approach you when given a signal. Your dog should come regardless of where she is, what she might be doing, or what the distractions may be.

**Verbal Signal:** Yes  
**Hand Signal:** Optional  
**Need to Know:** Name Response

This handout presents several methods to teach Come. The Come Game, the “Bread Crumb” Method, Hide and Seek. You may use any method.

## **Steps for Teaching Come:**

### **The Come Game**

The Come Game is played with two or more people. Each person needs a clicker and some treats. Have the treats in your hand. At first, each person will be only a few feet from the dog.

- Step 1 – One person says the dog’s name. Call your dog. When she looks at you show her the treats in your hand. When your dog sees the treats, she will start moving towards you. Click when your dog gets to you.
- Step 2 – Now another person will play the Come game by repeating Step 1. Call the dog’s name, show the treats, and click when the dog approaches.
- Step 3 – When your dog is easily moving between people, it is time to add the signal. Say the dog’s name, when she looks show her the treats. As she is moving say, “Come”. Click when your dog gets to you. Repeat with all people playing the Come game.

### **Training Tip**

Do not say Come too quickly. Make sure your dog is moving so that the signal is paired with the action of coming to you.

Once your dog catches on to this step she may, after getting her food reward, go to a person who did not ask her to Come. This person should not click.

The goal is to teach your dog to Come on a signal rather than coming because she might get a food reward. So at this step only click if she has been given a signal.

- Step 4 – Next, teach your dog to have her collar touched. Call your dog’s name. If needed show her the treats. (At this stage, your dog may be happily walking toward you without the aid of a food lure.) Before

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clicking, reach out for your dog's collar or leash. Once you have the collar or leash in your hand, click.

### **Extra Advice**

Many dogs learn to come, but run right past you or remain out of reach playing keep away. By clicking while holding onto your dog's leash she will learn to be comfortable with having her collar touched. If she is off leash and someone grabs for her collar to keep her from running away, she will not be startled.

Step 5 – When your dog is doing well with the Come game, you can challenge her by moving farther away from her, practice in different rooms, and practice around mild distractions.

### **Extra Advice**

Reward your dog every time she comes to you. Sometimes you will reward with a click/treat. Other times you will use life rewards like a tummy rub, a game of fetch, a walk in the park, a ride in the car, or her dinner. Coming to you should be a celebration and always rewarded positively.

If you need to bathe your dog and she does not like to be bathed, do not give the signal Come and put her in the bathtub. Instead, either go and get her or tell her to Come, reward her with a short game of fetch, and then give her a bath.

When your dog is loose and playing, do not always end the fun by telling her to Come. Sometimes give the Come signal, put on the leash, and then reward her by releasing her to resume playing.

### The "Bread Crumb" Method

If you do not have someone to practice the Come Game with, teaching your dog using the "Bread Crumb" method will be useful.

Step 1 – Get some delicious, high-value food rewards for your dog. Show her the treat and drop it on the ground. As she moves toward the treat say, "Come". Click when she gets to the treat you have dropped on the ground.

Step 2 – While your dog is eating the treat, move away from her and drop another treat on the ground. Repeat Step 1. Do this several times. Gradually increase the distance she needs to Come to get the food reward dropped on the ground.

### **Training Tip**

Sometimes instead of moving away and dropping another treat, remain by the treat. When she gets to you reach for her collar or leash. Click and treat while holding her leash.

### Hide and Seek Method

This is a fun game for your dog. The act of searching for something is naturally rewarding for a dog. Additionally you will make the behavior stronger by clicking and treating when your dog finds you.

Step 1 – Have someone hold your dog. Find a hiding place and then tell your dog to Come. When she finds you, click/treat. Repeat several times.

Step 2 – While your dog is finding you, another person can hide. Once your dog has found you, the other person can ask your dog to Come. Continue playing hide and seek with your dog. Be creative in finding different places to hide.

### **Training Tip**

At first, click/treat each time your dog does the Come. Once she easily comes each time you give the signal you can reward her with a favorite toy, by tossing a ball, or by giving a tummy rub.

### **Extra Advice**

The Come is one of the most important exercises you will teach your dog. It takes many training sessions and lots of practice to build a reliable Come. Keep distractions to a minimum when you are first teaching the Come. The distance between you and your dog should be short at the beginning. Once the behavior becomes stronger, gradually increase both the distractions and distance while practicing the Come.

When practicing the Come outside, your dog should be on a long-line or in an enclosed safe area. Outside you will be competing with a world full of ever changing distractions of sights, sounds and smells.

The signals should be consistent. Make sure that you and everyone is using the same signal. If the verbal signal is “Come”, everyone should say that instead of “over here” or “come on”. The hand signal should be the same as well.

Give only one signal to your dog. Do not keep repeating the signal. As your dog is moving toward you, you may cheer her on but do not repeat the signal.