

Ty Brown's

HOW TO GET YOUR DOG TO COME WHEN CALLED... EVERY TIME!



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Every Time!

By Ty Brown

Teaching your dog to come when called is the most important exercise you will ever teach your dog. Let me repeat, teaching your dog to come when called is the most important exercise you will ever teach your dog.

If there were ever a battle between dog training exercises for ultimate world superiority the fight would be between the 'down stay' and the 'come when called'. It would be a great battle. They would sell out Caesar's Palace in Vegas on fight night and the whole world would be watching to see who would be crowned "World's Most Important Dog Training Exercise". The odds would be evenly matched and after ten rounds the result would be... draw!

All right, a bit of fantasy, I know. They would never sell out Caesars Palace. They would hold it in Madison Square Garden.

Regardless, the 'down stay' and the 'come when called' are going to be the two most important things your dog will ever learn in his life. One could argue that if all you were to do was teach these two exercises than you and your dog could lead a happy, productive life.

In my career I have had numerous clients for whom I have trained their dogs to an exceptionally high level of training. I have trained these dogs to instantly respond to dozens of commands and do so with flair and enthusiasm. I have taught dogs everything from your general obedience commands of 'sit', 'lie down', 'heel', etc. all the way to going to bed on command, going to the bathroom on command, running to the side of a child to thwart a possible kidnap attempt, shaking hands, searching a house for intruders, swimming on command, finding snakes and barking at them on command,

protecting against a car-jacking on command, picking up dropped keys, and myriad other commands.

Clients have literally spent tens of thousands of dollars per dog to get this level of training. Do you know what most of these clients end up telling me months after their dogs have received this level of training? They have told me that 95% of the commands that they use on a daily basis are the 'down stay' and the 'come when called'. Interesting, isn't it?

Now, that isn't to say that you shouldn't train your dog to do everything I previously mentioned and everything else under the sun, but when it comes to daily life, you really are going to be using only a small set of commands.

Getting Started

Start this exercise in an open area. Have your dog on the long line and put him in a sit stay. Your left hand is holding the long-line and your right hand is extended away from your body at a 90 degree angle with your palm facing the dog, this is the first part of the hand signal.

You will notice that I am having you train the 'stay' and the 'come when called' with hand signals as well as verbal commands. The reason being is that as they are the most important commands I like to pull out all the stops and cover every base to help Buddy understand what these exercises mean. Dogs actually communicate more based on corporal physiology (the way your body moves, your posture, your subtle gestures, etc.) than they do by verbal cues so these hand signals actually help them to understand what you mean.

You can train hand signals with any command that we have previously taught by giving the signal as you give the command. Through repetition the dog learns that the hand signal is the same as the verbal command. With heeling you have already used a 'hand signal' so to speak. By stepping off with your left foot you have taught Buddy that this is his non-verbal cue to heel. Common hand signals for sit are a closed fist and for lie down is a palm down hand sweep toward the ground.

For the next part of the 'come when called' you are going to break the rule that we set earlier about keeping the leash loose at all times. To begin the exercise you are going to swing your right hand toward your chest, this is the hand signal for coming when called,

as your left hand pulls the leash toward your body while you say 'here' and you are going to jog backwards a little bit.

Okay, that is a lot to do at once. To review, right arm swing, left arm pull, mouth says 'here', legs jog backward. Easy enough, right? Well go give it a try. It may take a bit of practice before you get it right. In fact, the way I train this with my own dog training clients is by acting like a dog myself to begin with. What I will do is have the owner hold one end of the long line and I, acting the part of the dog, will hold the other end. I then will instruct the owner to go through the motions of this exercise. It is very rare that a dog owner gets it right the first time. It will be rare that you the reader will be able to get it perfect the first time as well. I strongly recommend that you enlist the help of someone, have them read and understand this section, and work on this behavior together. If you can work out the bugs and the mistakes before you work with your dog you will notice that training will go much quicker and smoother with your dog.

The reason for running backwards is because it tends to help a dog want to run toward you, it gives him a target to run toward. Have you ever been to the park and seen someone chasing after their dog, screaming at the top of their lungs just trying to get the dog to come back? I have. Most of the time the dog thinks that it is an awesome game of tag, you're it! Nine times out of ten if that owner were to run the opposite direction it is going to be enough of a stimulus for that dog to change directions and go in the direction of the owner. Most dogs have what is called prey drive. This is the drive that impels them to chase a ball, a cat, or a car. By running backwards you use his own drives and instincts to help him learn. Just make sure you know what is behind you. I can't tell you how

many times I have run into something in my attempts to train this behavior.

All four actions: 1) right hand makes the hand signal, 2) left hand pulls, 3) call out the command 'here', 4) legs run backwards- need to be done simultaneously. If Buddy starts to come right away than the tension and pulling stops and you begin to praise him as he trots over. If he doesn't come right away you need to continue jogging backward and pulling on the leash. It may drag Buddy for a bit but right as he begins to come on his own that dragging will stop and the praise will start and he will learn exactly what here means.

When Buddy gets to you the actual key to this exercise takes place. You must lay on the praise. If you have been using treats, use them now. If it has been toys, break `em out at this point. When he gets to you he must feel like it is his birthday!! By that I mean that you must be very expressive and exaggerative with your praise. You must let him know that coming was the best thing he has ever done in his whole life. He has got to understand that returning to your side is the most wonderful thing that a dog can do.



When your dog is at a distance start out by showing him the hand signal which is the right hand facing him used in a sweeping motion toward your body.



As you sweep your hand toward your body start pulling on the long line as you start trotting backwards.



As your dog begins to come to you praise him heavily. Keep trotting backwards as he is on his way.



When he gets all the way to you make sure to praise him heavily.

Avoid this Mistake!

Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen. Let me reveal one of the biggest, one of the most unbelievable, one of the worst mistakes that a dog owner can make. You can never, ever, ever, ever, call your dog to you and then give him a correction when he arrives at your side. Ever.

Lets examine the come when called exercise as taught to Buddy from the time his owners bring him home. Buddy is a happy puppy as most puppies are. He looks incredibly cute as he bounds around the house. His ears are floppy and his feet are way to big for his body.

When he first comes home he is bombarded with 'come-on' and 'come here' and 'hey puppy' and everything else. Buddy, being a happy puppy, always playfully runs over to whoever is calling him and they love on him and play with him when he gets there.

Life continues happily until one day, soon after he arrives, Buddy goes to the bathroom on the floor. His owner calls him over and Buddy being a happy puppy comes running over only to have his owner spank him and send him on his way with a few choice words.

"That was new," Buddy thinks, "I sure didn't like that." A half hour later owner catches Buddy chewing on his new slippers. He calls him over again to give him another spanking. From that point on coming when called is sometimes negative because he will often get reprimanded. It is also, however, positive sometimes because his owners will give him praise and pet him when he comes over. Buddy, like all dogs, doesn't have the mental capacity to connect peeing on the floor or chewing the slipper with the spanking he gets so he believes that the reason he got spanked previously is because he came when called. This is obviously the exact opposite of the desired goal. You

want him to believe that coming when called is always a good thing, not something that may end with a painful spanking.

Because of a lack of training, whether it be positive or negative, coming when called has always been optional for Buddy. They have shown him that if he doesn't come there is no consequence, so consequently when they call him, if he feels like going to them, he will. If he doesn't feel like it, or if there is something more interesting, or if they look mad, then he won't come.

The tried and true rule for getting your dog to come when called is the following: You must set up training situations to show your dog he must come when called and he must have a wonderful experience every time when he gets to his owner.

This means that your days of calling Buddy in anger to punish are over. If you catch him digging in the flower bed and you call him over you just gave him a 'get out of jail free' card. You must now praise him for coming. It doesn't matter what you catch him doing. If you catch him in the middle of hatching a presidential assassination and you call him to you, you must praise him for coming. In fact if you are just hanging out with the dog and he comes to you of his own will without you commanding him, you should praise him there, too. Think back to the section about associations. We want the act of coming to have a very positive association attached to it.

So what do you do when you catch him doing something wrong in the house or yard? What can you do instead of calling him over? We will get to that in the behavior modification section. You will learn about all the tools and tricks that are available to let your dog know he is doing something wrong while he is in the act of doing it.

All right, back to the training. So you began from a sit stay, did your four actions at the same time and you have begun to teach him what 'here' means. Now you have got to mix up the scenarios. You have to call him from different positions. Call him from a down stay, as he is sniffing a tree, as he is walking ahead of you on a walk, in the park, etc. Have that long line on him at all times and call him whenever he least expects it.

A quick word of caution. The 'come when called' can actually destroy the 'stays' you have taught Buddy. (I told you that they sometimes fight) That's right, what I have seen happen many times is that the owner puts Buddy into a 'down stay', walks away, and then tells him to come. So far so good. Then he puts him in another 'down stay', walks away, then calls him again. Owner repeats this several times.

Buddy is a smart dog. Even if Buddy isn't a smart dog it is going to be a very short time before Buddy realizes, "Hey, every time he tells me to stay he just walks away and calls me. I think next time I am just going to go to his side on my own and avoid all the hassle." So that is what happens. After a short time Buddy begins to anticipate that you are going to tell him to come so he jumps the gun and comes before you get a chance to give him the command 'here'. So now instead of having a good 'down stay', Buddy sometimes breaks it to come to your side before you have the chance to ask it of him.

What you must do is mix up the training so that Buddy never knows what is coming next. By that I mean you should put Buddy in a 'down stay', leave and then call him. Then put Buddy in a 'down stay', leave, but instead of calling him, return to his side. Tell him to stay again, leave, and then return to his side again. Every fourth or

fifth or tenth time you will call him so that he never knows if you are going to call him this time or the next.

If he does break the stay behavior before you call him, make sure that you correct him back to his original spot, just as you did before in training him to stay. The key is to think variety. A variety of situations, commands, and scenarios. Mix up every training session and Buddy will never know what to anticipate. A dog that doesn't anticipate your next move is more likely to remain in whatever the current command is that you have given him.

The Next Step

Now that Buddy is coming every time when you call him and pull on the leash it is time to move on to the next step. This next step is super easy. Put Buddy back on the long line and take him to the park or the back yard or wherever. Tell him to 'here' but this time don't pull on the long line. If he comes, great, it is Happy Birthday time. If he doesn't immediately begin to come you must give him a quick, strong correction toward you as you run backwards.

Notice the difference between step one and step two. The difference is, before you were pulling him toward you, essentially teaching him what it meant to 'here'. Now if he doesn't 'here' you will give him a correction. Remember the secret to getting your dog to come every time? The first part was showing him that he must come every time. So give him a firm correction, jog backwards a bit and when he comes, praise him like mad. If he still doesn't start to come you must keep correcting until he does.

Keep in mind, coming when called means that the dog must come all the way to you. I know, that sounds like a no-brainer. But sometimes what your dog may want to do is just a partial completion. What can happen at times, especially if you are calling him from a longer distance, is that you will call him, he will begin to come, but realize that there is something else on the way to you that he would rather do. You may see that half way to you he veers off into another direction. Be prepared for this. If he does veer off, you must right away correct him again toward you as you repeat the command.

Another incorrect behavior that I have seen many a time is the quick 'here'. By that I mean that Buddy does come all the way to

your side but instead of staying with you runs off right away. Be prepared for this to happen as well. If he does return but then keeps running right past you immediately turn, begin moving the opposite direction, and allow his momentum to correct him. As he gets the correction, move backward a bit as you repeat the command. This way he will recognize that as he returns to you he is not allowed to go jogging off unless you allow him to 'break'.

At this stage, ladies and gentleman, it goes without saying. I have said it once, I will say it again. Please, please you must always, always have the long-line attached if you are going to call him with 'here'. To reiterate: One of the greatest mistakes trainers make is setting themselves up for failure by not being prepared to enforce a command. If Buddy is still in the training phases of this exercise and you call him with 'here' and he doesn't feel like coming what recourse do you have if you don't have any way to correct him for not coming?

You have taught him that coming when called is optional!!

At this stage, ladies and gentleman, don't do it. Have patience. Train your dog with correct and lasting principles and the little bit of extra time you put in will pay years of dividends.

Well, what about the times when you need to call him over but you don't have a leash or long line attached? There are two ways to respond to this question.

1) Always have a leash or long line attached during the training phase.

2) If you just can't have a leash or long-line attached, don't give Buddy any commands that can be un-trained.

So for example, if you don't have a leash attached and you need him to come, instead of using 'here' and potentially un-training that exercise, just use his name. Or maybe make a clapping or whistling noise as you call his name. Or maybe tell him 'com-ere pal' or anything that isn't 'here'. If you un-train 'come-ere pal' it isn't a problem. If you un-train 'here' you will have a big problem when you need to call him to you.

The better you are at being consistent right now the sooner you won't have to be consistent. Don't worry, you won't always have to be ready to back up any command. Be patient and it will pay out soon.

Case Studies

It was not too long ago I was playing with Rocco, my dog. I was throwing the ball around for him and we were having a good time.

One of my throws went errant and after a few bounces landed in the street. Rocco went after it quickly. As he did I saw a car come around the corner. I immediately called out for him to return. He abandoned the prize ball and immediately returned to me.

Who knows what would have happened had he not come right back to me. He could have been injured or even killed.

Luckily I had done my due diligence with the 'here' command. Rocco understood, and still understands, that when he hears the word 'here' that he must return quickly.

I love to train dogs. I love being able to work with man's best friend. I love to improve the lives of dogs everywhere and help dog owners so they don't become frustrated when dealing with their canine friends.

I also love knowing that the training I put into my dogs can literally save their lives. Do the same. You may find that your training never does save the life of your dog, but if the time ever comes you will be grateful that you put in the effort.