



WAG & TRAIN^{LLC}
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Someday Your "(Paw) Prints" Will Come

While you're busy pardoning my pun, consider all the times you keep repeating the same unsuccessful techniques to get your dog to come when called.

All of us have tried the "drill sergeant" routine which requires us to shave our heads, stand at attention and bark the word, "Come" menacingly. How well did that work? Ten percent of dogs will actually come. Forty percent will roll over and submissively urinate on our new Berber carpet and Fifty percent will make an about face and march off to the mess hall.

So how do you convince your dog to make tracks in your direction? You build their "recall muscles". Think of teaching this behavior like a personal trainer. You've got to start with the fundamental drills. It's not likely that your dog will want to come to you just to make you happy. He's got a full schedule, dust bunnies to chase, floors to lick clean and guard duty at windows. He needs to believe that coming to you is better than anything else he has in mind including trotting after the neighbors' blowing newspaper.

Sign a contract with yourself that you won't continue making the same mistakes and expecting different results. Here they are:

1. Don't say "come" more than once. Your obedience cues are not optional!
2. Don't use a tone of voice that sounds like the dog's in trouble. I'd run the other way, too.
3. You're creating a desire in your dog to return to you when you call, don't forget to pay him with valuable rewards (not dry milk bones or kibble).
4. Don't chase him if he doesn't come. That behavior is very rewarding and will guarantee that he'll play that game over and over again. (See point #5)
5. If your dog is off leash he'd better be coming 99% of the time! If that's too much for him, work with him on a long line so you can reel him in if you need to.
6. If your dog is in an environment where he is too distracted to listen, simply walk up to him quietly and clip his leash on him.
7. Don't grab for his collar. He'll definitely get better at avoiding you.
8. Never yell or punish him when you have to go get him. He needs to think coming to you is fun and safe.

Practice coming short distances every day and with consistent rewards if you want to build a reliable come.

Laura Brody, CPDT

