

The following is a method I use often and believe Ms. Pryor is spot on. She did, after all, invent clicker training.

Using a Clicker to Teach the "Come" Cue by Karen Pryor

Coming when called: it's one of the most important behaviors you can teach your dog. It's a convenience; it can also be a lifesaver. But coming when called--every time--is not as simple as Sit or Down. You want your dog to come right away, when you first call, no matter what. When he has dashed out the front door. In the backyard. Off leash. In the park playing with other dogs. When there are squirrels around.

You can get there, but it takes some step-by-step planning. The clicker can be a huge help. Let's begin.

First Level

1. Let your dog discover that coming over to you, when you ask for it, is a huge opportunity to earn a click and a treat. Start indoors when the dog is distracted by some other activity. Call his name. If he looks at you, click and toss a treat away from him. When he gets it and finishes chewing, say his name again and pat your leg to tempt him over. If he ignores you, fine. Just repeat the first step again later, and move on when he looks at you every time you say his name. When he reliably lifts his head and comes toward you, click as he takes the first two or three steps. Toss a treat again. You want him to find out that coming toward you earns a click and then treats happen. At first, you don't want him to assume that he must come all the way to you each time or you might withhold the treat. A few steps earns the click until the behavior becomes reliable. Then repeat the exercise until he must walk all the way up to you to receive the click. When he does so, toss the treat across the room so that he must leave you to get it, which sets him up to repeat the "come" behavior right away.
2. Try the exercise in a new part of the room or in another room. At least twice a day, call him when he is not expecting it and click and treat him for coming. Click while he is still moving, not after he arrives. If he is to understand why he's getting the click, you must click the movement, not the position he ends up in.
3. After the click, try rewarding him for coming to you with things other than food: opening the door to go out; letting him into the car; playing with a tug toy, or relaxing with a chew toy or rawhide treat.
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5. When he comes to you quickly and eagerly most of the time, add the word "Come" to the process. Keep it crystal clear; don't say "Come on, come here boy, atta boy" or anything else. Just say his name, say "Come," use your leg pat and a smile to bring him over, click as he arrives, and toss the treat. Repeat in different places and occasionally throughout the day, whenever you have something to give him or do with him that he especially likes.
6. Try calling him back and forth between two people, with each of you using the word 'Come', and clicking and treating when he arrives. You no longer need to toss the treats; just drop them or hand them to him. Try this in different rooms. Use three people-kids are great at playing this game.
7. From now on, "Come" is a special cue. It means, "Hurry to me and you'll make me click." Don't expect the dog to 'obey' this new cue when he is completely distracted: outdoors, say, or when playing. If you say "Come" once, and he didn't respond, don't use it again; just go get him, gently and calmly, and put him on a leash if necessary, to take him where you need him to go.

Second Level

Let's take the show on the road. Teaching 'Come' outdoors.

1. Take your clicker and treats and put the dog on a long line: use clothesline or two or even three long leashes hooked together. Please don't use a punishing collar; a simple buckle collar is best. Go to some open place where there is nothing much going on; a parking lot or empty playground is good. Let the dog explore, dragging the line, while you hold the far end. Remember to keep slack in the leash to avoid accidentally hinting to the dog you are about to call him. Now, say his name, the word "Come," and click if he even LOOKS at you. Go to him and hand-feed the treat, so he doesn't ignore it in favor of distractions in the outdoor environment. Now back off a few feet and try again. Practice this here and there around the open space. If he does come all the way back to you, click and give him something special and then let him go back to exploring again. Wait a while before practicing the "Come" cue again and then go home whether this recall is good, bad, or indifferent. It is important not to push the dog for repeated successes and run the risk of breaking down the behavior. End on a positive note and repeat at least weekly for a while.
2. If your dog has a favorite doggie friend, you and that dog's owner can let the dogs play in one house or yard, and practice calling each dog's name, saying "Come," clicking, and treating, and then letting the dogs go back to playing. Puppy classes are an ideal place to practice this exercise. The dog learns that 'Come' doesn't always mean that the fun is over; but only that he can earn a treat and then return to playing. If you don't have a dog

- playmate, ask a human friend to help out. Ask them to get a game of tug going with your dog, then call the dog away, and let him return to his game after he's come to you and gotten his click.
3. To take your training to the next level, namely, walking the dog in especially distracting places such as parks and woods, begin with the dog on a leash or long line. Practice "Come" about once every ten to twenty minutes; don't drive him crazy with it. Always click before you let him go back to sniffing and exploring. Clicking 'strengthens the behavior' far more than praise or treats alone, and you'll need a strong recall behavior in these environments. The probability of having your dog 'come' when you need it in the future is increased if you click while it's happening now.
 4. When you are confident that when your dog is 20 feet away, he will come when called, allow him to trail the long line in a quiet, safe outdoor area and go further from you. You can still step on the line to catch him if he starts to go too far. If he ignores you when you call, walk over to him, catch him, and take him home right away, with no discussion or scolding.
 5. Squirrels present a special challenge even to dogs who dependably come when called. If you are confident that you can get a good response to 'Come' from thirty or forty feet, try putting your dog in very distracting situations with a long line back on. Let him plunge after a squirrel. Hold the line. When he pauses at the end of the line, speak his name, say "Come", and click if he comes toward you. Go to him, and click again. Holding your end of the line, go with him to 'chase' the squirrels. Allowing him to chase the squirrels is the treat you are giving him. "Permission to chase" is a powerful reward for earning a click by coming when called. The fact that you go with him will make the game even better.

The Rest of the Dog's Life

Throughout the dog's life with you, take advantage of real-life opportunities to test your 'Come' cue, in order to reward the dog generously for making the right decision.

A call from you should be a thrill for your dog, even in a distracting or frightening environment.

Always, however, be realistic. If you have always dreamed of a dog that would come with you on hikes or runs, through the woods or anywhere, without a leash, know that this isn't always possible. Our modern environment is crowded and hazardous. Also many dogs have been selectively bred for behavior that overrides any training to come obediently when called. For example, huskies and other sled dogs are bred to run long distances in harness; off-leash they may run long distances every chance they get. Pointers, setters, and other hunting breeds are

bred to range widely. In 100 acres full of pheasants they will range for hours, and only afterward can they easily be recalled or caught and kenneled. In your neighborhood park these breeds, or shelter' and rescue mixes of these breeds, will not always be easy to call back.

Rehabilitation

Are you are starting with a dog that from long experience ignores "Come!" or any other version of that? Whether it's your old dog or a new dog you have adopted or rescued, there is an easy fix.

Follow the instructions above, but when you get to the stage where you add the cue, use a completely different word. 'Banana' would work, but you might feel conspicuous yelling that at the agility competition. Some popular cues are "Back," "Here!" "By me," "Home in" and "Ready!" Or think of your own. Teach a new cue, if the old one has lost its power.