



COME!

Everyone wants their dog to shoot back to them like a bullet the second they're called. "COME" means stop whatever you're doing and come directly to me as fast as you can. No hesitation! No thinking about it! That means he ignores the dog barking outside the fence, the cat prowling near the gate or the bicycle zooming down the walk. It's a thing of beauty to see a dog come bounding into his owner—tail wagging and filled with excitement just to be near the person he loves, trusts and respects. For the trained dog it's like coming home after a hard day at work.

Always begin training your dog to "COME" while he's on lead. This is the one command you want to make sure he obeys. It can be the difference between life and death. Start with him on a short (4' to 6') lead and have him in front of you. Back up and say "COME" in a happy voice at the same time as you give him a gentle tug on the lead. Run backwards a little bit to encourage him to come quickly and enthusiastically. This will also build momentum. Always praise lavishly, first with your voice, then with your hands and a treat. Only give the command one time, but be cheerful and excited. Never angry or frustrated and always praise when he's coming towards you. NEVER CALL YOUR DOG TO SCOLD HIM!

As he begins to get the idea, begin using a longer lead and mix things up a bit. Try turning and running before he reaches you. Then turn around and give him a big hug. Don't try working off lead for a long time, and even then, begin in a fenced area.

Even though your dog will learn what the word "COME" means very quickly, this is one exercise that you'll need to practice forever. If he learns—just once—that he doesn't have to come when he's called, you've created a dangerous situation where the dog thinks he has options. You'll need to go back to the beginning steps and proceed cautiously.