

Teaching your dog to come on Land and in the Water

With younger dogs, you start with obedience on the land, making sure they know the commands first and what is expected of them. Then you progress to do the "force to come".

Next you do these same commands in the water. Once they know the come command freely, then you do a "force to come" which is really a strong "reminder" of the command.

For the water, use a long clothesline, yellow plastic, etc that will float. Use a clip on the end of the clothesline that will clip on to the collar. The other end is straight, no loops on the end to tangle the dog. This can be 30 feet or longer. Let the dog retrieve on land until they disregard the rope. Have them drag it around while you are playing with them.

Then have them retrieve on water. Start off with short retrieves, and then lengthen. When you give the command to come and they don't respond, you can use the line to tug and pull them in. Give a big firm tug on the rope, pulling the dog a few feet. This will dunk their head under the water slightly. When they come up, say "come". If they don't, do it again. It will take several times of this possibly. It is not done real aggressively, just enough to make the dog respond. Each dog is different, some needing a "firmer" dunking and a few more times.

As soon as they start to come, its good-boy, good-boy - come. Have them heal and sit and pet on the chest when sitting with "good boy good boy". Always let them remain sitting for a bit. Then repeat right away in the water.

If this is a puppy, they don't have to come to heal position. Simply hold out your hand on your left side, wiggle your fingers and have him come to you. He can sit anywhere, depending on what you have done with him so far. The main thing with this is to get him to come. If he drops the bumper don't worry. You aren't working on that right now – this exercise is strictly to get him to come when called.

Important -- Make sure the rope is stretched out behind you before you send the dog so it doesn't tangle on your feet or around the dog when you send him to retrieve, either on land or water. Always do this "force to come" or any command on land first. That way the dog can be 30 feet from you and if he doesn't come, you simple grab the rope and reel him in firmly.

You can also use this method when a dog has gone into the "frenzy" mood and is barking and biting at bubbles and going in circles. This is a bad habit to let a dog do. I don't consider it a good "play technique" for a dog. They can have fun but I feel this leads to other problems so I wouldn't let me dogs do this if they continue longer than a short period of time or if they do it every time they are in the water.

They other alternative for correcting a dog to come is for you to go in the water and correct them to come. We have done this many times in shallow water. You should always be prepared to do this in case a dog is getting into trouble. Hopefully the weather is warm and you have shorts on!

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