



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Canine Master on Pet Life Radio - Episode #7 Teach Your Dog to Come When Called

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Hi, I'm Chris Onthank, and welcome to the Canine Master radio show. Do you find yourself calling your dog's name only to have them look at you and go, "Yo man, what's going on? I'm heading out over here. I'm running into the trees," or "I'm going to go sniff the grass?" If so, you're not alone. So many people are sitting there calling their dogs and they don't respond. This is a very common problem. It's probably one of the most important things to teach your dog. Every year, dogs are running into the street. Some of them get hit by cars. Some of them run away, can't get your dog back. It's so important to have a reliable, as we say in the obedience arena, recall, sort of recalling your dog back to you or teaching your dog to come. It's so important to have that. Pretty darn reliable.

It could save your dog's life. It could cause you a lot less aggravation. It could get you off to work on time. The benefits are amazing. So, I'm going to talk about that today and figure out how we can get your dog to come when called reliably and stop a lot of these hassles that are sort of hitting you on a daily basis. By following a few simple steps, we can make it so much better. And I promise you, if you do the things I'm about to tell you to do, you're going to have a pretty darn reliable recall and your dog's going to come when call. We've got lots to cover.

I often hear from clients that they don't get their dogs to come when called, and it is a very frustrating thing to not have your dog coming when called. So, here's how it works, guys. Your dogs see cause and effect. I come to you, you call me, you're going off to work and you shove me in my crate. I come to you, you call me over and then you pull up the nail clippers and you clip off my nails, and I hate that. I come to you, you call me because I've just torn the couch. You grab me by my collar, you shut my nose towards the couch, bad thing to do anyway, and I hate coming to you because every time you call my name, "Chuckles, Chuckles, get over here. Did you do this, Chuckles?" And what's going to happen is your dog's not going to want to come to you.

He's going to hate coming to you because every time you call him, something negatively impacts him. Cause and effect. You should never ever do anything negative to your dog after you call him. It includes, let's say you're going off to work. I got to go to work, my dog's outside. "Chuckles, come over here, Come, come, come. Come over here. Come, come, Chuckles." You grab him, you shove him in his crate, you pick up your keys, you put your

jacket on and off you go to work, and now Chuckles is all alone. What do you think Chuckles just figured out? That if I come to you when I'm outside in the morning and you call me, now you're shoving me in a crate and I'm going to be in there for the next four to eight hours. So, these are negative things that happen when your dog has come when called. You should never do this.

Anytime you call your dog, when you call it, it has to be positive. Always. Always. So, never call your dog and punish him. Shouldn't do that anyway. Supposed to catch your dog when he's thinking about it or in the act. Remember, we've talked about that a bit over the last few shows, catch your dog in the act. So, you never punish him after the fact anyway. Never call your dog and put him in his crate. So, what do you got to do? The dog's outside, you got to get going to work. So, what do you do? So, call your dog into the house. When he comes in, love him, love him, love him, maybe give him a treat. Wait for five minutes, then go and get him, grab him by the collar or tell him, "Crate." Give him a treat in the crate, and off you go.

See, that little five minute interruption? He won't see cause and effect. So, it's really important. I got another one. How about the dog runs away? He's ran away, he's gone for five hours. You can't find the dog. You've got signs up all over the neighborhood. You are calling your dog everywhere up and down the street, "Chuckles. Come, Chuckles." You can't find your dog. Now you're late for work, you've messed up your whole day, you missed your party, whatever has happened. And the thing is, Chuckles is next door. He's next door playing with a little puppy that he found, he's covered in mud. You find him, you are furious. You walk over to him and you go... Now, what should you do? You should do this. You go, "Chuckles, I want to rip your little head off" in a nice, sweet tone, but of course you would never reprimand him if he comes to you. Never reprimand your dog for coming when called. Bad idea. Cause and effect.

Okay, so let's talk about how this all works. There's an instinctual component to coming when called. Let's talk about tones for a second. All around the world, animals are being trained, whether it's a horse or a cat or an elephant or whatever people are working with animals, farm animals. Getting an animal to come, all around the world, people use the same type of tone. It's called a repetitive tone. Repetitive tones create movements. How do you call a cat? "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty," right? I'm telling you right now, you call a cat that way, generally they come running. How do you make a horse move? Right? Repetitive tones. So, if I'm calling my dog with a long tone, not a repetitive tone, chances are instinctively the dog is probably not going to want to come.

And I'm going to tell you why. Because long tones, long tones stop movement. How do I stop a horse from moving? All around the world, "Whoaaaaaaa." Long tones. So, when I go outside and I call my dog Chuckles to come and I go, "Chuckles, come," instinctively, it's stopping him. So, we can pair come with a treat and they can learn that one long tone means come, but instinctively, his reaction to that tone is actually to stop. So, how should we call our puppies and our dogs? I like to do, "Come, come, come, come, come." I call my Dave like this. I saw my kids this morning doing this. "Dave, come, come, come, come, come." They naturally do it, and Dave comes running every single time. I've got a great recall with Dave. But that's one component. So, tone is really important.

One more thing. Don't do a guttural tone or a threatening tone when you call your dog. "Chuckles, come. Come here, Chuckles. Come." Bad idea. Guttural tones are going to be threatening, so you don't want to do that either. I like to call the dog in a nice, happy tone. "Chuckles, come, come, come, come, come. Come on, Chuckles. Come, come, come, come, come." And pretty soon, Chuckles is on his way running to you.

Now, here's the next thing, is that I like to also play the teach a game, and one of the things that you always want to do is you want to imprint the word, "Come, come, come" in a certain way, and I call this a recall game to my clients. What we do is that we get two people, we start off with two people and we start out pretty close together, and I'll give treats to my client and I'll put treats in my pocket as well.

Now, here's the thing, your dog's only coming to treats. I hear this all the time. "You know, my dog only comes to the word cookie." Well, that's fine. You know what? You got a good recall. Your dog knows that if he comes to you, he's going to get a cookie. There's nothing wrong with that. But here's the thing, we don't want to be sitting there feeding our dogs all the time, and we're going to talk about that in a moment. But when I do this recall game, basically what I do is I take about a bunch of treats and I put them in a pocket, and I put it in a pocket for a reason. Because I don't want to be holding the treat in my hand every time I call my dog. I want the dog to come to me and then I reach into my pocket. So, the dogs kind of guessing. Do you have a treat? Do you don't have a treat? They never know.

So, here's how it works. You're going to grab two people. You start off with two, then you might add a third and a fourth, and they start at a distance at about 15 feet apart, and I'm going to lower my stature initially to call my dog, especially if I have more of a fearful or a body pressure sensitive dog, meaning you bend over the puppy, the puppy backs up. So, kneel down. You got some good treats in your pocket. I like to use like... There's a treat called Tiny Tots made by Solid Gold. I tend to use those. You can get those, I think, at most pet shops around. It's a soft treat. I stick it in my pocket. I call my dog. "Chuckles, come, come, come, come, come."

I'm kneeling down. Chuckles will come over to me. I will grab him by his collar first and then I'll reach into my pocket and give him a treat. Grab him by his collar first, then reach into your pocket and give him a treat. And the reason why I grab him by his collar first is that I'm going to teach him that if I grab your collar, a treat is coming. How many times do we see dogs, when you go to reach for them, they back away? They play the keep away game and they get to know that this is a game. We don't want to this to develop. So, I call my dog. "Chuckles, come, come, come, come, come." Reach out, grab his collar. Then I go into my pocket and I give him a treat. Now, I stand up and I have my assistant or my wife or my son or my daughter play this game, and they kneel down and they go, "Chuckles, come, come, come, come, come," and then Chuckles runs right over. They grab the collar, go into their pocket and give him a treat.

And you repeat that a few times. So, all of a sudden, Chuckles is starting to figure out when you say, "Come, come, come, come," I run over you and I get a treat. Now, you're going to actually increase your distance. So, I start off at about 15 feet. Now, we're going to back away from each other a little bit, and we're going to always start this game inside. You're not going to start this game outside because there's too many distractions. Remember, we're

imprinting the word, "Come, come, come, come." We're teaching your dog that "Come, come, come, come" is a good thing and that good things happen when you say that.

Okay, now we get that inside. You know what we might do is now we might go into another room, so the dog is running back and forth. I might add now a third person. So, get three people with treats in their pockets and calling Chuckles in different orders. Pretty soon, Chuckles is going to think this is the most fun game going. He will love this. Okay, so the next thing is once we have that and it's doing pretty well inside, once that, "Come, come, come," that recall game is working pretty well inside, now we're going to go into an outside situation, maybe your backyard, where there's not a lot of distractions, because you want to add distractions gradually. Okay, so you're going to start playing this game outside in the yard. Now, one of the hardest things is, is to call your dog from your back door because your dog has probably learned that when you call him from the back door, he comes to you, you bring him inside and all his fun ends.

So, you basically want to start the "Come, come, come" or the recall game outside with one to two to three people and then gradually back up to the door that you would call your dog from. So, you probably use your backdoor, your sliding glass door or whatever that may be. So, as I back up gradually, I now call Chuckles to the back door. Chuckles comes running, running into the house, or right to the back door. I step behind the threshold, so now I'm actually inside. Chuckles comes in, I grab his collar, go into my pocket, I give him a treat, and now I let go of him and let him go back outside again. And then I'm going to repeat it. I'm going to repeat it over and over and over and over and over again until the dog gets the idea that if I come running to you and I get a treat, good things happen. And many times, I get to go back outside again.

So, these are the kinds of things that we're going to want you to do over and over, and you're going to find that it really becomes a pretty reliable recall. All right. Now, a lot of people are asking me, "Chris, do I have to have a treat in my pocket the rest of my life?"

So, do I need to have a treat my pocket for the rest of my life when I call my dog? And the answer is no. All right, let's talk about this. The biggest reward to a person that's in Gamblers Anonymous is called the variable schedule of reinforcement. That's why there is Gamblers Anonymous. Those poor son of a guns are addicted to a variable schedule, meaning this. I go to the slot machine, I put in my coins, I pull the lever, ching ching, nothing. Ching ching, five quarters. Ching ching, two quarters. Ching ching, nothing. Ching ching, jackpot! Okay? That's a variable schedule, and that's the most addicting schedule for any animal, any person or any animal. So, basically, what I'm about to show you guys to do is that you're going to make your pocket a slot machine. We're going to make your dog addicted to coming when called.

So, this is how it works. You're going to take those seven treats for the... So, for the first three weeks, when you start this program or this new regime of teaching your dog to come, for three weeks, I want you to have treats in your pockets. Now, I know, ladies, a lot of you don't wear pants with pockets. So, go get some. You're going to put treats in your pockets. I don't want you to have a bait bag or a fanny pack because then that becomes a visual cue that I need to have on to come to you. In other words, the dog won't come to you unless you have the bait bag on. We don't want that. So, you're going to go get some, I don't know,

Charlie Bears, a harder biscuit. Charlie Bears is another great treat. I think, that works well, but you want to get a treat that your dog really likes.

So, you're going to put these in your pocket. I wouldn't hotdogs because they get all slimy and cheese, and you don't want that in your pocket, but a treat that it's going to hold up in your pocket with body heat because sometimes they start to disintegrate if it gets warm. So, you're going to stick those seven to eight treats in your pocket. You've been playing this recall game and every time you call your dog for the next three weeks, every single time, you're giving him a treat. So, what are we teaching him? We're teaching him that you are a slot machine. When I go to play a slot machine down in Atlantic City or Las Vegas, I don't walk up to the machine and go, "Hey, I wonder if they put money in this machine today." I expect that there's money in the machine. So, that's what we need to get your puppy to think, that you're always walking around with treats in your pocket.

You may not be later on, and you probably won't be, but he'll think they're always in there. So, for the next three weeks, every single time that you call your dog, "Chuckles, come, come, come," he's getting a treat. For three weeks, you're going to call him several times a day. And remember, cause and effect. So, you're going to call him, grab him by the collar, reach into your pocket and give him a treat. You're going to do that for three weeks, every single time. After the third week... Now, by this time, you should see that your dog comes pretty much 85% of the time. And what's going to happen is, is that your dog is coming, you grab this collar, give him a treat. The next time you call him... After three weeks, you call him, he comes to you, you grab his collar and you give him a lot of love.

"Oh, I love you, love you, love you, love you, love you." And then I call my dog the next time and I give him a little love. Next time, he comes to me and he likes to play ball, I throw the ball for him. Next time he comes, I call him, jackpot, four to five treats all over the floor. Maybe last night's steak is in there as well. My point is, is that the dog starts to come to you and called and he is getting addicted by this variable schedule of reinforcement. He never knows what's going to come, but every once in a while, there is a treat. Now, gradually, what you do is you increase the time between when you give them a treat, but you're always going to make it positive. You're always going to be happy when he comes. You're always going to give him a little pat. And every once in awhile, you're going to give him a treat or a jackpot or a ball throw or whatever he loves to do.

So, basically, the dog starts to become addicted to coming. So, you know what? We have a lot of people out there right now that I know have questions for me, and Jaimee is here. Jaimee, tell me what questions we have from our listeners about coming when called.

Jaimee: Okay. Our first question is from Maggie from Virginia. Maggie says she has a border collie who is so fast. What should she do if her dog is running away from her and she can't catch him because he only wants to play chase?

Chris: Well, you know, Maggie, this has probably become a learned game. So, when she calls him, Jaimee, he just runs away. Is that...

Jaimee: He's running in the other direction and initiating a chase game.

Chris: Aha. Okay. So, here is something that works really well if you can't get your dog to come close to you or starts to play the keep away game. What you do is you never go towards your dog when you call it. This is very important.

If you call dog and he won't come, don't start walking towards him. The best thing you could do is actually run in the opposite direction. This is key. Clap your hands, run in the opposite direction because when you do that, the dog is going to start chasing after you. It is very important that you never ever chase after your dog when you call him because then he's going to play this keep away game, and that's... I guarantee that's how Maggie got this dog to start doing this. This dog has learned that it doesn't come, she starts coming after him, and now he plays keep away and he thinks this is the most fun game.

So, what you should do, Maggie, is you're going to call your dog. If he doesn't come, run in the opposite direction. When he gets to you, kneel down and go into your pocket... Grab his collar, go into your pocket, give him a treat. You're going to want to teach that new, "Come, come, come" to you, and then he's going to learn. Now, one more thing. A lot of people have been using the word, "Chuckles, come" and they don't have good responses. So, what I want you to do is you're going to change your cue, which changes the game. So, by going from "Chuckles, come" and now going to "Chuckles, come, come, come," it's actually a different cue. It's like people telling me, "My dog only comes to the word cookie." Well, it's fine. You've got a good come when called. It doesn't matter the cue. Dogs don't understand language like we do. Dogs understand cues. So, change the cue, change the game and stop running after your dog.

Maggie, I just want to tell you, this really does work. I was with a friend the other day and she has a little dachshund who got out into a main road and she was in a panic chasing after the dog, and I said, "Stop, stop. Let's run the other direction." And as soon as we ran the other direction, the dachshund stopped and started to chase us. She just wanted to play chase. She didn't care if she was the chaser or the chatee, and then we got her in our arms and we learned a lesson and that really does work. So, good luck.

Awesome.

Jaimee: All right, we have another question. Lisa from Maine has a boxer. She says, "My boxer recently got out the front door when the kids were playing and we didn't notice right away. We were so terrified. We drove around all night looking for him, put posters up, alerted animal control. We could not find him. We were so distraught. Then two days later, he showed up in our yard. We were so thrilled and didn't know whether to scold him or hug him. What is the best thing to do in this situation?"

Chris: You remember that you can never really correct a dog. You can't correct a dog if you don't catch them in the act or when they're thinking about it. So, if you were to scold them when he came back to you, all you're doing is scolding him for coming to you, and that's going to have a disastrous effect. So, what you should do in that situation is, first of all, boxers love to run around and they love to run... I've seen a herd of boxers, they get out and they're just wanting to get a lot of exercise. That's a high energy dog. So, make sure that you have your dog contained in a fence. I would go out and get yourself a fence so that your

dog can't run away. And of course, we never tie up dogs. So, you wouldn't do that to any dog.

But a fence, a real fence is a good thing to do. If that happens again, he escapes, what you're going to do is you're going to call your dog, he comes to you, give him treats and love, and then start a program as I've stated in this show. Teach them the "Come, come, come" recall game and get a reliable recall, and you're going to find that pretty soon, your dog likes to come when called. Now, here's the thing. The recall I've just described is about 85% reliable. And on one of my next shows, I'm going to talk about the emergency recall. And that recall is where we activate the dog's prey drive. It especially becomes effective with dogs with high prey. Kind of like your dog, Maggie, the boxer. I bet you it has a high prey drive. And what the dog's going to get is, is that the dog will become about 95% reliable. You won't believe it, and it works incredibly well. So, on one of our next shows, I'm going to teach you guys the emergency recall. So, stay tuned for that show.

Jaimee: We have one more question.

Chris: You do? Okay.

Jaimee: Yes, we do. This question is from Jerry from Ohio. "Hi, Chris. I have a beagle. As we know, follows the nose and has a high prey drive. I would love to be able to let him off leash at the park or run free in a field, but I'm worried he will run off and I won't be able to get him back. I have a pretty good recall command, but when he is outside, he is just too distracted. What is the safest way to work towards getting him to be able to be off leash?"

Chris: Well, beagles are hunters and once they get off, it's really hard. And again, this would be a dog that would be great for that formal or emergency recall that we're going to talk about. With a beagle, you need to be that dog's leader and you control the hunt, not the dog. So, basically, we talk about how to become your dog's leader and how to get your dog to follow you. Teaching your dog to walk behind you and take your lead is a good way of doing that, especially with the hunting breeds. I, at that point, would not let my dog off leash if I don't have a reliable recall. If I have not gotten that dog to come when called on a variable schedule of reinforcement, I wouldn't do it. Now, I have seen beagles have amazing recalls with the "Come, come, come" and a variable schedule, because you know what? A lot of bagels are food hogs and they love that variable schedule. And sometimes, that drive will be higher than, what we call, its prey drive.

But when your dogs out running around and sniffing and hunting, it's a very hard, what we call, drive or instinct to compete against unless you have a very good recall already established in your repertoire. So, until you have that, your dog should stay on leash or in a fenced area, and I wouldn't walk your dog off leash because you're just teaching the dog that it gets to ignore you. Here you are calling your dog, your dog's running off, he's learning that he doesn't have to respond, and then to try to fix that later on is much, much harder.

All right, I think that's it. What a great show, and make sure... I really hope you found our show interesting today. Make sure that if you have any questions, you can always email me Chris@CanineMaster.com. That's C-A-N-I-N-E M-A-S-T-E-R.com, and be sure to visit our

website CanineMaster.com or just click on "Ask the Canine Master" and leave your questions for me, and I'm going to do my best to get back to you. I may even have you call into the show with your questions. So, send me your videos and your photos so I can help to see what's going on with your dog and maybe help you master the solution with your pet.

Follow me on Twitter @CanineMaster and ask me your questions and with the hashtag AskCanineMaster. That's hashtag AskCanineMaster. Goodbye for now, and see you next time on Canine Master where I will continue to help you master the relationship with your dog.