

# 2-Minute Trainer: Come!



**FROM  
KEEP-AWAY ...**

**... TO COME!**



Hope Saidel  
Fran Saidel

ByGolly!  
Publishing



# 2-Minute Trainer:

## Come!



From keep-away ...



... to come!

Hope Saidel

Fran Saidel

# Table of Contents

[Save your nose?](#)

[Also Known As: The Recall](#)

[Rules of the Recall](#)

[Recall Game #1: Collar Grab](#)

[Recall Game #2: Catch Me If You Can](#)

[Recall Game #3: Hide and Seek](#)

[Recall Game #4: Hand Touch](#)

[Recall Game #5: Push Away](#)

[Summary](#)

## 2-Minute Trainer: Come!

Come!

It's quite possibly the most important thing you can teach your dog. **It could save his life. Or your nose and clothes.**

Huh? **Save your nose?**



**YIKES!**

Years ago we had a Brussels Griffon named Razzmatazz. One autumn evening we went into the back yard for “last potty.” And there was a skunk on the patio. It had backed itself up into a corner, so the “operational” bits were facing away from Razzy, but we could tell it wasn’t happy. And bad things were going to happen.

Hope screamed “**RAZZ, COME!**” with more than just a bit of desperation in her voice. **And he did!** She scooped him up and ran for the house.

We’ve had a dog skunked. We’re forever grateful it didn’t happen again.

And all because Razz knew, and responded to, “Come!”

### Also Known As: The Recall

In obedience terms, the “come” command is known as the recall. We’re used to teaching it that way, so we’ll keep using that word, since you know it now, too.

You can **use whatever word you like**. Dogs don't speak fluent English and the word means what you teach. Use something you can remember, that's short enough to say quickly, and is easy to yell if you need to. Come, Here, Front, Toast - any would work. Zanzibar wouldn't be a great choice for a command word.

Because the recall is such a vital command, we have some absolutely strict rules for teaching it to your dog.

**The Prime Directive** is: **NEVER** use “**COME!**” to call your dog for something he/she doesn't like. **EVER.**

What do we mean?

If your dog hates getting a bath - don't call him to you and stick him in the tub. Go get him.

If your dog hates getting brushed - don't call her to you for grooming. Go get her.

If your dog hates getting into the car - go get him.

If your dog is scared of thunder - go get her.

If your dog has been naughty and you're going to yell at him or punish him (neither of which you should do, but if that's your choice) go get him.

If your dog doesn't love going in her crate (which she should), go get her.



Torque, showing off  
his "Front!"

## **Rules of the Recall**

**Never give a command you can't make happen.**

Before your dog understands what the word means, you can yell “Come” until you're hoarse. If you use “come” (or whatever word you've chosen) before your dog understands it, you're undermining the value before you've even started.

**If your dog has the option of ignoring you or walking away - the word means nothing.**



- Be sure your dog is wearing his/her collar (or harness) and leash before you start.
- Don't use your dog's name for anything but "happy" stuff. In one of those hairy situations: your dog gets out of the house and is heading towards the street, or the plumber left the gate open, or he's eating something nasty he found on the ground, (or he's heading for a skunk), you may not have the presence of mind to yell anything but his/her name.

**If only "good" things have happened when your dog hears his/her name, you have a better chance of getting your dog's attention.** (Like Razzy with the skunk...)

### **Recall Game #1: Collar Grab**

Everyone can play:

- Get everyone in the house involved. It's only **two minutes**, people!
- Everybody get a handful of your dog's favorite treats
- Stand in a circle - as far apart as possible in a familiar, confined space. Either the house or yard.
- Bring your dog into the circle - it doesn't matter where. The dog should be wearing his collar and leash.
- One person call the dog. **Use ONLY his/her name.**

We're not using any other word to call the dog. The point of the game is teaching the action "come." **Call using only the dog's name.**

When the dog reaches the person who called:

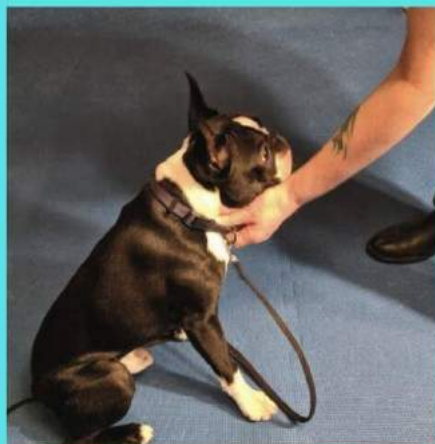
- Grab the dog's collar
- Deliver a treat **right into the dog's mouth**. Don't make him/her reach for it. The farther back you can put the treat into the dog's mouth, the better.
- **Let go.**

Someone else call the dog's name. When the dog reaches that person: Grab. Give. Let go.

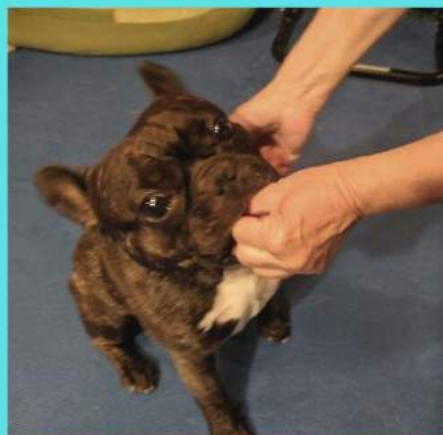
Next person: Call. Grab. Give. Let go.

Keep going until everyone's treat supply is gone.

The order is absolutely crucial. **Grab the collar. Give the cookie. Let go.**



GRAB the collar. Simon doesn't mind because he knows he's getting a treat.



Put the cookie (almost) down your dog's throat. Don't make him reach.

We're teaching the dog that a person grabbing his/her collar is a good thing - it means he/she is getting a treat! We're trying to **avoid "keep-away"** games if your dog accidentally gets out of the house.

If your dogs are like ours, this will be a known (and favorite) game in no time. Our dogs run from person to person in the yard, just hoping it's time to play "Collar Grab."

Try to avoid having more than one person call the dog at the same time. Point at each other for the next turn, or say another person's name. You could go around the circle in order, but it's more fun for the dog to figure out who's calling and run over!

If you live alone you can still play "Collar Grab." By all means take advantage of friends and relatives when they're available, but if they're not, you can still play. We call it a "**restrained recall**" and this is how you do it.

With your dog wearing his/her collar (or harness) and as long a leash or rope as your room/yard will allow, loop the leash around the leg of a table or chair. Have your dog sit close to the piece of furniture, and go as far away as you can while holding the leash, making sure the leash won't get tangled between you. Call your dog's name and drop your end of the leash. When your dog reaches you, grab the collar. Give the treat. Let go.



**2-Minute Tip.** (This applies to all games!) - Teaching the "word."

When the dog reaches you (or whoever you're playing with) say "Good Come, (or your word) Fido!" or "That's Come!" We want Fido to **associate the action with the word**. We're giving your dog the vocabulary she needs.

Wait to use the word as a command until your dog understands and loves the collar grab game. We're teaching one thing at a time to make sure the dog understands before we add more.

### What if Fido doesn't come?

Especially the first time you play the Collar Grab game, your dog won't understand what's expected of him and may not go running to the person who called. If this happens, **be patient** for a few seconds. The same person can call again - make sure it's in a happy voice, but everyone else has to be quiet. Have the other people try not to look at the dog. **And**



**really, really keep everyone from laughing.** Dogs seem to know when they're being entertaining and will keep it up as long as they have an audience.

If the dog still doesn't come, seems confused, or tries to check out - have the person who called **back up a few steps**, calling the dog's name. That person can also **clap or whistle**. **We want your dog to choose the right behavior - responding to his/her name. Give lots of encouragement.** The caller can even sit or lie on the floor, slap the ground, make funny noises. At some point, your dog will want to check and make sure the caller is okay. **Use your dog's natural curiosity - the weirder you act, the more likely your dog will come see what's going on.**

### Collar Grab Game review:

- People in a circle, each with treats.
- One person call the dog's name.
- When the dog arrives: Grab the collar. Give the treat. Let Go.
- Someone else call.
- Keep going until the treats run out (or 2 minutes is up).
- Introduce your recall word - "Good Come!" "That's Come!"

### Recall Game #2: Catch Me If You Can

Dogs are, by nature, predators. Most can't resist movement - chasing a ball, a bunny, watching birds. We can **use this to our advantage** with another Recall game - Catch Me If You Can!

For this game **you'll need** a few treats in your hand, your dog on collar and leash, and room enough to run a few steps away from your dog. You can certainly play in a hallway, or whatever room in your house has space to run. If you're using a hallway, be sure all the available doors are closed to minimize distractions.



Booker is chasing Fran - a great "Come to me" game!

Get hold of your dog's collar and face a wall (or closed door). You should be a couple feet away from the wall. While holding your dog's collar, show him/her the treat, toss it toward the wall, let go of the dog's collar and start running (or walking fast) in the other direction. As you start moving, call your dog's name. She should chase you - that's the point of the game. When she reaches you, celebrate! Tell her she's a good dog, such a clever dog, while delivering each treat directly to her mouth.



**2-Minute Tip** - It's worth noting here that **dogs can count**.

They're not good at it - but they can do it. Individual treats, delivered **one at a time**, are more valuable to dogs than a handful shoved in their faces. It also lengthens the time the dog is engaged with you - and makes you the source of all things yummy and wonderful. So if you have five treats in your hand, give each one to your dog with praise. "Good dog." "You found me, what a good boy!" "You're so smart!" "Wasn't that fun?" "Good puppy!" "Good come!"

As your dog becomes more familiar with the game, you can add your Recall word. Toss the treat, run the other way while calling your dog's name and your Recall word, give individual treats.

When your dog knows the game in place, **try it in different locations**; different rooms, outside, in the yard, in the driveway, at the park, at the mall. Wherever you can safely play.

This game is absolutely essential to remember if your dog ever escapes from your house or yard. Remember it so it's second nature. We've all had that moment of panic when we realize our beloved dog is loose. It's absolutely our instinct to chase after him to keep him safe.

To a dog - "Chase" is the best game in the world. **We want to be sure your dog is chasing you, not the other way around.** It's one of the most difficult things to remember and execute - but it works. If your dog ever gets loose, run in the opposite direction, calling his/her name. Chances are he'll chase you. If you've played the Collar Grab game enough, with enough reinforcement, he'll run right up to you so you can grab his collar.



Works for  
toddlers, too!

### **“Chase” works with toddlers!?**

Incidentally, this works on toddlers, too! Our next door neighbor’s two-year old little girl was having a “NO!” morning. She didn’t want to go in the house. She didn’t want to come to Mommy. She didn’t want her doll. She wanted to wander down the block towards traffic. Hope was out getting the newspaper and saw the dilemma. She explained the idea to our neighbor and suggested Mommy try running away from the little girl. Hope stood between the toddler and the street to make sure nothing went too awry. Our neighbor was skeptical at first, but took off “pretend running” at first. She saw her daughter stop and watch. Mommy picked up her pace, and almost instantly, her daughter

started toddling after Mommy as fast as her little legs would go.

Catch Me If You Can works. We’re taking advantage of our dogs’ predatory instincts to chase their prey. So **pretend you’re prey!** Let your dog chase you, not the other way around.

### **Catch Me If You Can Review:**

- Treats in hand
- Dog in collar and leash by your side (practice on both sides)
- In an area where you have some room to run
- Face the wall
- Throw the treat
- Run the other way calling your dog’s name
- Praise and reward when your dog catches you.

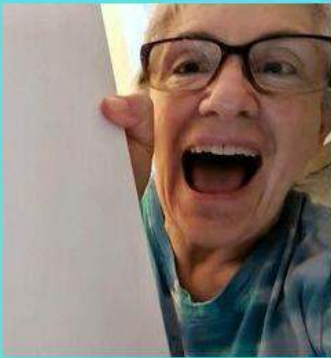
### **Recall Game #3: Hide and Seek**

There was a variation of this what went viral a while ago. It was called the “What the Fluff Challenge.” You can search and find tons of videos.

Basically, people would stand in a doorway and raise a blanket in front of themselves so their dogs couldn’t see them. They simultaneously dropped

the blanket and ran away, so they seemed to disappear. The dogs' reactions range from complete indifference, to puzzlement, to total panic.

“Hide and Seek” is exactly the game you remember from childhood, but you’re playing with your dog. It’s a little easier with more than one person, but you can do it on your own, especially if your dog has a reliable sit/stay.



Call your dog when  
you're hiding behind a  
door.

How to play:

Have the dog sit.

Tell her to stay (or have the other person hold onto her collar).

**Grab a few treats and go “hide.”** It can be just around the corner, at the farthest room in the house, on another floor, wherever.

**When you reach your “hiding place,” call your dog.**

**When he finds you, celebrate!** Remember to give each treat individually, it “counts” more that way.

Then - **do it again!** You don’t have to go back to the starting point. Continue the game from where you are. You can go back to the original position or someplace else entirely.

If your dog doesn’t “find” you quickly, call again. Make some unusual noises. And reward generously when he does show up.



**2-Minute Tip** - We’re always telling our competition obedience students to **be more exuberant when their dogs do well.** For some reason, people are reluctant to get demonstrative with their dogs in public. Or possibly in private. One of our students said “I’m not a loud person. I don’t know if I can do that.” Which is interesting, because her dog is one of the loudest we’ve ever met. He’s asking for feedback! She should give it to him!

Another student said “We British aren’t very demonstrative.” Well, her dog is a Portuguese Water Dog from Chicago. He doesn’t know anything about being British.

If you have to step outside your comfort zone to get loud with your dog, take that step. **Your training will improve by leaps and bounds when your dog understands when he's done well, and when he hasn't.** And he'll never tell a soul that you can't carry a tune in a basket. If you make up a "Good Dog" song, you'll be amazed how responsive your dog will be to it. If she only hears that song when she's done something wonderful, hearing the song will make her joyful every single time you sing it.

We increase our dogs' understanding by when and how they get rewarded for their behavior. If there's an immediate "Click" from the clicker, they know they did well. If a treat appears in their mouth, they're on the right track. If we praise, or chant a "Good Dog" mantra, they're right on target. If they get nothing, and we say nothing, they know the behavior wasn't what we wanted.

Be aware of the feedback you're giving your dog. Nothing means "not right." Something (click and treat, toy, or praise) means "That's it! What a good dog."

After practicing the Recall in class one evening, a dog that had been having difficulty finally got it right. Hope told the student to stop everything and celebrate right then and there. And the student took a few steps away before giving the dog the treat and talking to him. She missed the opportunity to "mark" the "right" behavior. Instead of reinforcing the wonderful choice her dog made, she let the opportunity slip away.

Right then. Right there. That's "marking" your dog's choice.

### **Hide and Seek Review:**

- Have your dog sit/stay, or have someone hold him/her.
- Have some treats in your hand.
- Find a "hiding place" where your dog can't see you.
- Call your dog.
- Reward when your dog reaches you.
- Do it again, as many times as 2 Minutes allows.





The hand touch. Simon is bashing his little pushed-in face into Fran's palm.

## Recall Game #4: Hand Touch

The Hand Touch, or Target Training can be used for lots of behaviors, but it's fundamentally a Recall. It brings the dog to you, within petting distance. Active engagement with you is at its core.

How to play:

Offer your palm to your dog.

When she touches it with her nose, click.

Using your other hand, put a treat in the center of the offered palm.

Tell her "good touch" (or whatever word you want to use)

Do it again!

This is an easy one and only takes a few seconds. If that's all the time you have on a busy day, this is a perfect game to play!

Your hand (or palm) will be the dog's "target" to touch. In agility and other kinds of dog sport training, we need precision and often use an object to target on - usually the cleaned lid of a plastic food container. Most trainers will recommend using the lid of an empty ice cream pint. Because you get to eat the ice cream.

**The value of target training is teaching the dog precisely where you want him to be.** And, regardless of where you are, the surrounding circumstances, or any distractions, you always have your hands with you. If you need to distract your dog from something, like the cat in the carrier in the veterinarian's waiting room, you can play the "Hand Touch" game there. **It's always a good idea to have a pouch of treats with you when you go anywhere with your dog.**

When you're playing the hand touch game, **be sure not to move your hand.** Your dog must come all the way in to touch. Hope found this out the

hard way - she tried to help her dog Teddy learn the game and bopped him so hard that it took weeks to get him playing “hand touch” again.

Remember that there’s no “almost” for dogs. It’s either right or it isn’t. If you accept three inches away from your hand, then your dog will think that’s the behavior you want. **We want that cold, wet nose actually touching your palm.**

When your dog is insistently and consistently touching your palm, offer the other hand. Alternate. Run across the room and alternate. Go outside (with your dog wearing collar and leash) and do it there. Go to different places. Have other people offer their palms.

**Can you see this becoming a hybrid of “Collar Grab” and “Catch Me?”** The result is for your dog to run to you whenever, however you call!

If you’re playing it right, your dog will start repeatedly bopping your hand with her nose to get the treat. And she should get one for every single “bop!” That way, when she’s getting in the way of your Mom who’s trying to get into the house with groceries, you can call her name and “Touch!” and she’ll happily come to hand.



**2-Minute Tip:** If you use any command, be sure to reward it! In the scenario just described, if you don’t have the clicker or any treats with you, lavish praise on your dog and scratch his favorite spot. Your dog should always be rewarded for making good decisions. If you start taking it for granted, the behavior will deteriorate. If you don’t care - why should your dog?

### Hand Touch Review:

- Offer your hand, palm out.
- Dog’s nose touches your palm - all the way in so you can feel it.
- Click.
- Using the other hand (leave your palm in place) bring a treat to the center of the offered palm and give it to your dog.
- Say “Good touch!”
- Do it again. 5x per session

## Recall Game #5: Push Away

This game requires **some space and lots of energy**. How much your dog enjoys it depends on the dog. This is Fran's Boston Terrier Booker's absolute favorite.

Booker is a dog with lots of energy and issues with focus and attention. By playing a high-energy game with him, Fran keeps his focus strong, keeps him engaged with her, and actually helps him concentrate on the training games that require more concentration and thought.

What you'll need

For this game, all you need is you, your dog, some room to play, and some treats.

It helps if you're able to get down to your dog's level, whatever that may be. Call his/her name and say, with some animation, something like "Do you wanna play?" or "Are you ready for a game?" or "Who wants to play?"

If your dog doesn't approach you, go to him.

Put your hand on his chest and push. Just enough so he moves back a step or two, at least with his hind feet.

Move back a step and engage him again, with animation: "What just happened?" "Was that fun?" Should we do it again?"

Again, if he doesn't approach you, go to him.

Push him away again.

At this point, Booker is acting like a rocking horse, running to Fran to get "pushed away" again. She can "push him away" fairly hard. As far as Booker's concerned, the harder, the farther away, the better. He comes bouncing back, ready for another round.

It's a significant step for him. He's a dog with real concentration problems and had a tendency when competing in Agility, to run off at the end of the run, especially if something went wrong on the course. By working this game, Fran was able to develop a routine that lets Booker know that not only is everything all right, but it's time to have more fun with "Push Away." And at the end of the "Push Away" game, Fran is able to grab Booker's collar, pick him up and get his leash. All as a prelude to cookies, of course.



Booker is thinking about being naughty.  
But instead ...



It's a game of "Push-away!" A great game that engages  
Booker and makes him want more!



**2-Minute-Tip:** When you're ready to end the game after a few pushes, let your dog know. Have a phrase you always say at the end of any training session that clues your dog. Always pair

treats with the phrase so your dog knows she's good.

We use the phrase "That's all!" at the end of every training session.

When your dog comes after your final "Push Away," **make use of your Collar Grab and say "That's all!"** or whatever phrase you'll use, and give him a treat or five.

### Push Away Review:

- Call your dog with excitement.
- When she comes, put your hand on her chest and push her back.
- Retreat a step or two if she doesn't bounce back to you. (Engage her instinct to chase you.)
- Push
- Retreat
- Repeat as many times as you like!
- After your final "Push Away" for the session, grab her collar.
- Use your end phrase.
- Give her treats!

### Summary:

As you can tell, all of the Recall games work together to take advantage of your dog's innate instincts and relationship with you. Every dog is different and one dog's favorite game may be "chopped liver" to another. Try them all and see which ones get the best response from your dog. You can even take favorite pieces from several. There's no "wrong" way to get your dog to come to you. As long as he does come, it's working!

