

# Levels of Learning

Freshman to Senior

**Freshman Level** – Your dog is just starting to understand what *both* the **word** and **hand signal** mean

- They need **lots of reminders and a lot of treat reinforcement** at this stage
- It's crucial to **pair your marker word** (like "Yes!") **with a treat** to build strong associations
- Practice frequently so your dog links the **word, your energy**, and the **tasty reward**

To progress from Freshman to Senior Level, add in

Duration  
Distance  
Distractions

1 at a time,  
as your dog excels,  
add a second, then a 3<sup>rd</sup>


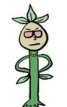


Be sure to practice in different environments, situations etc

**Sophomore Level** – Your dog can perform the behavior, but it's not perfect yet they might still get distracted

- A **Sophomore-level "Come"** might mean your dog responds, but slowly, or stops to sniff on the way
- Keep using **frequent reminders and reinforcements** to build reliability
- Try alternative motivators (tug, ball, love) on occasion to start building their power

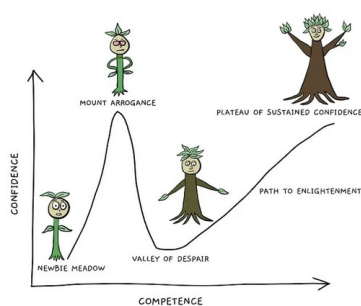
Once your dog performs the behavior successfully 8 out of 10 times (80%), move to the next level.

The Competence-Confidence Matrix

	LOW CONFIDENCE	HIGH CONFIDENCE
LOW COMPETENCE	 FRESHMAN	 SOPHOMORE
HIGH COMPETENCE	 JUNIOR	 SENIOR

**Turtle's Pace**

for kids but also relevant for dogs



**Turtle's Pace**

for kids but also relevant for dogs

**Junior Level** – The behavior becomes more automatic and polished

- Your dog **responds more smoothly and quickly**, with less hesitation or thinking
- A **Junior-level "Come"** is when the dog comes with **minimal distraction or delay**
- You should be using non-food motivators more and more often at this stage

**Struggling?**

Go back a bit to show them they have it!

**Senior Level** – The behavior is clean, smooth, and highly reliable

- A **Senior-level "Come"** means your dog responds **immediately and consistently (95% or more of the time)**, even with distractions around
- Food treats are only used to emphasize exceptional behavior or esp difficult situations from here on out