

Recall

The purpose of this exercise is to teach your dog that coming when called is not an option, but it is always pleasant.

It's not a bad dog that doesn't come when called – it's a normal dog. And it's not a good dog that comes when called – it's a trained dog.

The only way to create a reliable recall is to eliminate the choice and practice the pattern again and again, in new environments with new distractions, always keeping it pleasant and successfully completing your pattern. By eliminating the choice you can create a habit of coming when called and good habits are just as hard to break as bad habits.

Procedure

1. Call your dog's name once.
2. Give your cue and signal to come.
3. Encourage your dog to come to you as quickly as possible.

Using an animated voice, jumping up and down, clapping your hands, squeaking a squeaker, etc., but not repeating your dog's name or the cue, encourage your dog to come to you as quickly as possible.

4. As soon as your dog gets to you grab its collar.

Grabbing your dog's collar is essential to teaching your dog that the recall includes self-control and/or restraint. It's also the only way to know for sure that your dog is safe. Many dogs will turn the recall into a chase game and if you're in a dangerous environment this can cost the dog its life. By grabbing your dog's collar before giving the treat you'll know your dog is safe.

Many dogs learn to associate a collar grab with a reprimand since they're often grabbed as puppies when they get into trouble. This creates an unpleasant association with the collar being grabbed and can cause a defensive reaction and hand shyness leading to dog bites. If you grab the collar every time before dispensing the treat, you'll create a pleasant association with being grabbed instead of an unpleasant one and can prevent an aggressive reaction if there's ever a need to quickly grab hold of your dog.

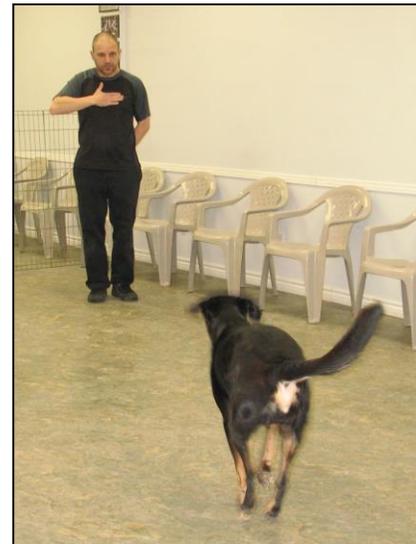
Recall

5. Reward your dog with treats and affection, making a big fuss over your dog as though it's done something very special. Make this reward a little party for your dog.
6. Reward your dog again with a "go play."

Hand Signal

Your hand signal for the recall begins with holding your right arm straight out to the side, away from your body. To call your dog, simply bend your elbow bringing your hand to your chest. The "come" hand signal is the opposite of the "stand" hand signal.

Come Hand Signal



Common Mistakes

Unpleasant Associations – Calling the dog to you to punish it or calling it when something the dog perceives as unpleasant is about to happen creates an unpleasant association with the recall. Once your dog thinks something unpleasant may happen if it comes to you, it's going to make a choice, and that choice could cost your dog its life. If you have to trim your dog's nails, give it a bath or anything else your dog doesn't like, do not call your dog; instead, go and get it and do what you can to make the experience as pleasant as possible.

Recall

Ending the Fun – If your dog is playing with its friends and you call it to end the play session, have a very special treat in your pocket to create a pleasant association with the end of the fun. While it's playing, call your dog to you on a regular basis to reward the recall with not only a treat but also another "go play."

Punishment or Being "Firm" – Trust is essential to a successful recall. For this and many other reasons it must be maintained and nurtured at all costs making punishment or negativity of any kind counter-productive to a reliable recall.

Repeating Your Dog's Name – Your dog's name should mean "follow the next instruction," therefore repeating your dog's name until it pays attention to you dilutes its effect and makes it less likely that your dog will pay attention when you call it. If you want your dog to pay attention the first time you give any cue you need to give your cues only once.

- Name Check In Exercise

To teach your dog to pay attention when it hears its name, call your dog's name only once. The moment it looks at you, give your reward marker "YES" and give it a treat. With repetition your dog will learn to immediately focus on you whenever it hears its name.

Repeating Your Recall Cue – Give your "come" cue only once then encourage your dog to come to you as quickly as possible without repeating its name or the cue. If you want your dog to respond the first time you call it, you can't repeat your cue.

Note

- If you've been using the "come" cue and your dog has not been coming when called, feel free to choose a new cue and start fresh.
- If your dog ignores your recall it will quickly realize it has a choice and making a choice can be dangerous for your dog. To prevent this, only use your recall cue when you're one hundred percent sure you'll be able to successfully complete the pattern.

For example:

- ✓✓ When you come home and your dog runs to greet you
- ✓✓ When there are no distractions
- ✓✓ When your dog is on a life line

Recall

- If you call your dog and it chooses not to come to you, go to your dog and show it a treat. Lure it back to the exact spot you called it from to complete your pattern then reward your dog.
- Begin recall training in the house where there are few distractions. If you call your dog to you on a regular basis to give it a treat, most dogs will come quickly when you call in order to get the treat. Repetition creates a habit of coming when called. When your dog is coming every time you call it, the training treats can be replaced with real life rewards.
- The moment you and your dog walk out the door of your house there are a myriad of distractions that will interfere with your recall. Begin practicing in your enclosed yard when things are calm. When in a secured environment such as a fenced yard or park, allow your dog to drag a life line (long leash or rope) behind it because your dog doesn't realize you have it when you're twenty, thirty or forty feet away. Simply pick up the end of the lifeline before calling your dog to prevent it from running off or turning the recall into a chase game.
- Until your recall is reliable, your dog must never have the opportunity to choose when given the come cue. It's normal for your dog to be attracted to the most exciting thing in its environment at any given time. If it's not you, your recall will fail. Every time you call your dog and are unable to successfully complete the recall pattern you're back to square one of your training program. Dogs remember, and once they realize they have a choice they'll make one. If you set yourself up to succeed, you will. If you set yourself up to fail, you will.
- In order to eliminate the choice you'll need to take safety precautions to prevent your dog from getting into trouble in the first place. If your dog tends to escape through the front door, lock that door and render it off limits. Use another door to break the habit and be careful that the habit doesn't simply move to the other door. If your other entrance opens onto a fenced yard, that would be the ideal door to use because if your dog does escape, at least it's safe in a fenced yard and not loose on the street.

If your young children are accidentally letting the dog out, put a hook-and-eye lock out of reach making your assistance necessary when coming or going. It's not difficult to prevent your dog from escaping from the house, it just takes planning, consistency and a little imagination. Preventing the problem is a lot easier than solving it once it's become habit and the dog has been rewarded for the behaviour.

Recall

- If your dog won't come when called, leave the leash, a long line or rope attached to its collar and make sure you always pick it up before calling your dog, and eliminate the option of coming or not coming.

If your dog chooses not to come to you when on its lifeline, it's important to become more exciting as opposed to being firm or angry with your dog. If need be, go to your dog, show it a treat and lure it back to where you called it from to successfully complete the pattern before giving it a treat. If you become angry, your dog will be more likely to hesitate or move away from you. Remember, no one wants to approach a stressed or angry person. Trust is crucial to effective training and it's not fair to punish your dog for doing what comes naturally. If you want something other than normal dog behaviour, you have to teach it.

The bottom line is that you're not going to give your dog a choice until the recall is reliable. At that point you can start cutting off pieces of the life line, approximately three inches at a time until it disappears altogether because your dog will know when the line is on and when it's off. If you give your dog off-leash playtime and it decides not to come when called, go back to the beginning and start your training program again.

When your dog is coming when called reliably you can begin to replace your training treats with other real-life rewards.

But remember, it can take a year or more of working your recall in various environments with a variety of distractions for your dog to get in the habit of choosing to come to you no matter what's going on around it. Although the recall is an easy exercise to teach, it takes time, repetition and consistency to create a really reliable recall.

