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## How To Teach an Emergency Recall

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Emergency recall is an important skill to teach your dog for management around other dogs, people, and places. This behavior may even save their life by stopping them from darting out into traffic or escaping the yard to chase a deer.

When teaching this behavior, always start in a calm, distraction-free environment such as a quiet room or the backyard. Choose a word or phrase that will become the cue, such as “this way” or “let’s go”. Pair a unique, high-value treat or toy to establish a positive association with your chosen cue.

The training process begins by randomly saying the cue when your dog is near and feeding the treat (or giving the toy) before walking away. Repeat this process five to 10 times throughout the day for two weeks.

After two weeks, test the emergency cue when your dog is elsewhere in the home. Be sure to have treats or the toy handy and, as your dog comes, give them several of the special treats or initiate a game of play. If they do not come quickly, start over again and continue the pairing of cues and treats five to 10 times daily for another two weeks.



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Over time, gradually increase the difficulty level. Place your dog on a long line and move the practice outside. Give your dog an opportunity to sniff and venture a short distance away before using the recall cue. When they return, reinforce them well. Slowly expose them to more distracting environments, including parks or other locations. Repeat the process on the long line and continue to reinforce the recall.

Once learned, continue to practice the behavior one to two times a week. Always offer that special treat or toy, making sure your dog is paid for choosing to return. If you follow this process and a real emergency occurs, your dog should still return even if you do not have this special treat handy because you have a history of paying them well. Praise them immediately, but still reinforce them with the special treat or toy as soon as you can.

Never use the emergency cue to call your dog to something they may not like, such as a bath or nail trim. This can poison the cue, create mistrust, and teach the dog to avoid returning in the future. Remember to be positive. Teaching an emergency recall takes time, consistency, and patience.

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