



## TEACHING COME WHEN CALLED (RECALL)

### Why train recall?

So your dog will come when it is truly important. This is one of the most important skills to teach your dog.

### The 5 rules of recall.

1. *Never call your dog for anything unpleasant.* Such as nail clipping, bathing, or having his leash clipped on to go home from the park. In short, anything that might give him pause the next time you call him.
2. *Never call your dog if you are not sure he will come.* All recalls should be successful recalls. Work at your dog's level: If he has a kindergarten-level recall, don't give him a graduate assignment like being called away from a cat in a tree.
3. *If you call your dog and he doesn't come, you must make it happen.* Run over to him and put a treat in front of his nose, backing up as you get his attention so he follows you.
4. *Never repeat the command.* Resist the urge to call over and over and over. It only teaches your dog to tune out the command. Call once and, if necessary, use rule 3. Make the recall happen.
5. *Fabulous rewards get fabulous recalls.* If you want your dog to stop whatever interesting doggie thing he is doing and come running to you, make it worth his while. Use extra yummy treats—no dry biscuits here!—or a well-thrown ball, or a game of tug if that is your dog's fancy. You don't have to play for long, just long enough to make him think that coming to you is very rewarding and fun.

### How to train it: Easy Beginnings

#### *In Your Face Recall*

Have lots of small, soft treats ready and get down to your dog's level.

1. Say your dog's name
2. Say the recall cue ("come")
3. Use a marker (clicker or verbal marker like, "Yes!")
4. Give treat

Repeat 10-20 times quickly. That's it. Your dog does not have to move towards you. The name and recall cue become associated with good things.

### Moving on...

Step 1: Call your dog and take a few steps backward. Cheerful tones often produce better results. Remember to actually give the command ("Fido, come!"); your dog's name by itself is not a recall.

Step 2: As your dog is moving toward you, click and treat. Make it easy and keep your dog successful.



## RECALL CONTINUED

### **Making it a little harder**

Step 1: Either place your dog in a sit/stay, or have someone hold him. The holder should be neutral so the focus is on the trainer. Move a short distance away to begin with and face your dog. You can add distance with continued success. Use cheerful tones—and make sure you are loud enough to be heard, especially in busy environments. Call your dog, starting with his name.

Step 2: If he does not come bounding toward you, make yourself interesting. Clap, whistle, squat, throw your arms out, and cheer your dog in: “Great, great, faster, you can do it...” As he comes, click. When he arrives treat him, or if it was a fast, enthusiastic recall, jackpot him by spilling lots of treats. You can also reward with play: throw the ball. If appropriate, release him to go back to whatever he was up to.

**Training Tip:** Find an extra yummy treat your dog has never had before but you think he will go crazy for (baby food, Cheez Whiz, liver paste) and hide it around the house. Once or twice a day when your dog is not expecting to be called, call him and reward him with the extra special treat.

**Location, Location, Location:** Change locations to practice recalls. Your dog’s recall may be great at home but terrible elsewhere. When you change settings, go back to basics. Practice “In Your Face” recalls first. Do short and easy recalls and jackpot your dog. Then add distance and distractions. Only ask your dog for an off-leash recall if you are 99% sure that your dog will respond the first time. If he doesn’t come on the first cue, go and get him! Get his attention and then ask for a shorter, easier recall. Add more difficulty only after you’ve achieved a high success rate (at least 80%) with easy recalls.

**Jackpot!** A jackpot is a large or special reinforcer for breakthroughs in training or exceptional effort. It becomes a memorable event. Jackpots are great for recalls. When your dog comes, praise and offer rewards for a full 30 seconds. You can also substitute play for food if this is valuable to your dog. Jackpots are intermittent. Since your dog never knows when it’s coming, you make it very valuable to him.

**Training Tip:** When working outside, practice in enclosed spaces or on a 30-foot leash until your dog’s recall is reliable.