



## Teaching Your Dog to Come When Called

Teaching your dog to come when called is often called a “recall”. A recall can save your dog's life. It can stop him from running in front of a car, or from chasing an animal into the woods. It can call your dog away from a tempting but dangerous delicacy he has just discovered.

### Getting the Behavior

Teaching a recall is easy, just reinforce your dog for coming to you! Start by kneeling a few feet away and making happy noises. Encourage your pup as he takes his first steps toward you and give him a yummy treat when he gets to you. Run a few feet away and repeat the process. Make it a fun game! When he's coming to you reliably, start using a cue, such as “come” or “here”. Add distance and distractions to the recall just as you would for a sit or other behavior. Calling a young puppy from across the yard when he is exploring a new, interesting scent is setting yourself and your pup up to fail. Walk to within a few feet, kneel down, and call him from there. Make sure to reinforce him for abandoning the distraction with something even better.

Success comes from repetition. Don't increase the distance or distractions until your dog responds immediately and enthusiastically to the recall cue. Also, remember to give a really high value treat every time you call your dog.

Call your dog one time. If he doesn't respond, go and get him. Don't call your dog when he isn't going to respond. Yelling "Max, come!" over and over as he runs around ignoring you only weakens your cue. Practice your recall in distracting situations, increasing the level of distractions gradually.

Finally, don't take recalls for granted. Remember, your dog's life could depend on the reliability of his response. This means never, ever punish a recall!

- Don't call your dog and then do something he doesn't like, such as crating or confining him and then leaving him alone.
- If your dog is doing something you don't want him to do, don't call him and scold him, or even call him and ignore him. If you call him, reinforce him for coming.
- If your dog is doing something he enjoys, don't call him away without rewarding him. Balance the times when fun ends with several "practice" recalls after which he is allowed to go back to what he was doing.

### The Collar Grab

When you call your dog, take hold of his collar before you deliver the reinforcer, and do that every single time. It does you no good to have a recall if you can't then catch your dog. Dogs have been killed because they avoided their owners' hands and, at the last moment, bolted into the street. Having someone reach out to grab and restrain your dog is startling at best. Associate reaching and grabbing with good things by feeding a yummy treat once you have a hand on your pet's collar.

### Tips

- When your dog is several feet away, say his name and give your recall cue. Then begin running backwards away from the dog. Encourage him as he starts toward you and reward him when he catches up. This exercise engages the dog's natural desire to chase.
- While you're training, remember to give a super-good reinforcement every time you call your dog.

- Ask one or more friends or family members to help. Stand eight or ten feet apart, facing each other (or make a circle, if you have more than two people). Have one person call the dog and have that person give a treat. Then have the next person call him. Repeat, gradually increasing the distance between people.
- Practice recalls in your house. Call your dog from across the room, from another room, from upstairs, from downstairs. Have a friend hold your dog (or ask your dog to stay) for a moment, then play hide-and-seek.
- Practice calling your dog away from something he wants, give him a high-value reward, and then let him go back to what he was doing. Practice that a lot.
- Do lots of short-distance recalls. You'll get more reps and build a habit faster. Grab your dog's collar before you give the reward every time. Again, a recall is no good if you can't catch your dog.