

Pawsitive Foundations Dog Training

10 RULES FOR A REALLY RELIABLE RECALL

Never, EVER punish your dog for coming to you!

Even if your dog has been ignoring you and then FINALLY decides to come to you, REWARD HER. Think about what association you are building with the dog, do you want her to think COME = PUNISH? Also, don't call your dog for unpleasant things, such as doing nails, getting a bath or ending a fun game, go and get your dog instead. The recall should ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS predict good things happening.

Don't call your dog unless you're 99% sure she will come.

Don't teach your dog that the recall is optional or unimportant, set your dog up to succeed every time. A good way to poison your recall cue is to call and then have your dog not respond. Only use your recall in situations it is strong enough to work in, then continue to work on strengthening your recall to more and more distracting environments.

If your dog already has a poor recall, start over.

If your dog has already learned to ignore your existing recall word, you need to start over with a new one, the old cue has been 'poisoned'. Try 'here', 'close', or 'pronto'. DO NOT use the dog's name!

Start Small!

A truly reliable recall is built on tiny baby steps. This means ALWAYS setting up the dog to succeed and creating a rock solid foundation where your recall word creates an instant association in your dog's head with FUN! Whenever your dog hears the recall word she should think that something FABULOUS has happened! To start create this, in your own living room take some tasty treats. Standing RIGHT in front of the dog say your recall word and give a treat. The dog is not moving AT ALL, all you are doing is creating an association that the recall word predicts good things.

Add Distance:

Once you've created a positive association and the dog is enthusiastically looking for her treat upon hearing the recall word, you can start adding either distance or distraction but NOT at the same time! Start with distance, take a step back and use your recall word, your dog will follow and you can reward. The key here is to repeat, repeat, repeat at every stage. Your dog should be thoroughly proofed at each stage before assuming the dog is ready to move on. That means you have to be 99% sure that the dog will recall at 3 feet before moving to 4 feet. This also means that your dog has to have a rock solid recall in the living room before moving to the kitchen.

Add Distraction:

Assuming you now have a dog that will enthusiastically recall to you anywhere in the house or yard with maximum distance, including out of sight recalls, it's time to move onto adding distractions. The key in setting up your dog to succeed is to START SMALL again. Do not ask your dog to recall from 50 feet while your daughter plays with a ball. Ask your dog first just LOOK at you right next to you and treat before adding more distance again. You should work up to recalling your pooch from other dogs, from other members of the household, and away from toys and food. Remember to add distance and distraction SEPARATELY, always set the dog up to succeed and don't increase your criteria until you are 99% certain your dog will recall immediately to you. Also, once the dog has recalled to you, RELEASE the dog to go and explore the distraction. Recalls should not mean 'the fun stops here'!

What to do if your dog doesn't respond:

First, BAD HANDLER, you did not set the dog up to succeed if your dog does not respond to the recall cue! You have progressed too far, too fast and now you've got a problem. DO NOT REPEAT YOUR CUE. If the dog doesn't respond the first time you MUST go get the dog. I don't care where your dog is or if you have to walk across a bed of hot coals to get to him, you MUST go get your dog. However, *you must NOT be angry with your dog*, Do NOT set up an association with the recall word and bad things happening! Walk down your dog until you can put a leash on them, DON'T use the recall cue for

this! When you have the dog, walk them back to where you called them originally and ask for an on leash, simple recall, reward and move on.

Now what have you learned? That your dog is not ready for that level of distraction or distance! Now ask for a recall that you KNOW your dog will succeed at and start again from there. The important part is that your dog does not learn that the recall cue is optional or that you don't really mean it the FIRST time.

Restrained Recalls:

A fun game to play with two or more people. One person holds the dog back while another enthusiastically calls the dog. When the dog is really excited to go, she is released to fly to the other person for a treat or toy. Then the game starts again in the other direction. Encourages fast, enthusiastic recalls!

Catch and Release:

An essential part of a good recall is that the dog is never expecting the fun to end when she reaches you. So it's very important to build up a foundation of 'catch and releases'. Whenever you call your dog reward and have a big party, then happily release them back to whatever they were doing. Try to have 9 happy 'releases' for every fun ending 'catch'.

RECALL = REWARD, every time:

It is ESSENTIAL that every time you recall the dog you reward her. EVERY TIME. The reward can vary from a tasty treat, a toy, a game, or an enthusiastic ear scratch, but it HAS to be something the dog enjoys and EVERY time. So be prepared to reward as soon as your dog gets to you, there is NO command that is more important, make sure you make it the most rewarding behavior your dog has.

Why this works:

The key to a really reliable recall is not that your dog finds a piece of hot dog more exciting than chasing a cat. The key is setting up a rock solid foundation where the recall cue becomes an almost involuntary reflex that the dog responds to without thought. This only happens with many, MANY successful repetitions and THOROUGHLY proofing the behavior in progressively more and more distracting situations while ALWAYS setting the dog up to succeed. The payoff is invaluable though, having a totally reliable recall in ANY situation is the most important skill you can teach your dog!