

Teaching the recall - "COME"

This is the most important behavior you will teach your dog. To start - whenever your dog is walking or running towards you - say "come" as she is on her way and then give a treat when she gets there. By doing this you are capturing the behavior you like (running to you) and teaching her what the word "come" means.

You want your dog to believe that coming to you is always a good thing to do. Recalls should ALWAYS be fun and exciting. You can call your dog and then do something fun like play a game of fetch or tug. Never call your dog to do something she might consider unpleasant. For bath time, go get her.

THE RECALL GAME ("Doggie in the middle"):

You need at least 2 people to play this game. Have the people stand about 6 feet apart at first. Each person should have treats. One person calls the dog by saying "come" in a high pitch voice. As soon as the dog gets to you, give a treat. Then the other person calls "come" - give the treat. Repeat this process over and over. If she won't come or hesitates, move towards her, show her the treat, and lure her towards you. Say "come" as she is following you back to your spot. When you get there give the treat.

Food Toss Recalls:

Toss a piece of kibble about 6 feet away, she will most likely run to it. Once she is done eating the kibble, call her back "come" and give the treat (using a special treat) when she gets to you, then toss another piece of food, etc. Repeat this so you can reinforce the recall over and over.

Restrained recalls:

If you have a helper you can practice 'restrained' recalls. One person holds the dog while the other runs away, turns, and calls excitedly. Then the holder releases the dog. This exercise builds the dog's desire to get to you. Only do this in a safe or fenced area.

Run away recalls:

Show your dog a really tasty treat. Run away from her, calling her enthusiastically as she chases you. Run about 12 feet or so, then turn and praise her excitedly as she approaches you. Give a treat when she reaches you.

Remember to call in a happy voice and give the treat when your dog comes to you. Only say your cue "come" once. If you call and call and your dog does not respond, you are teaching her to ignore you.

Work up to more distracting situations very slowly. You might start in a quiet part of the yard and do a few recalls, then move to the front sidewalk, then to the foot of the driveway, etc. Have a very high value treats for more distracting environments.

When your dog is doing well with the recalls you can add more distance (up to 20 feet). Remember to increase the distance slowly, foot by foot. Use a long line during the recall training when working outside. They come in 20, 30, & 50 feet lengths.

On some recalls ask your dog to sit when she gets to you before treat. On others, ask her to sit, take her collar, then treat. Vary these with the more exciting recalls so your dog is always surprised.