

reliable

Recall



RELIABLE RECALL



WHAT IS RELIABLE RECALL

“Reliable recall” means that when you call your dog to come, you are 99.99% sure they are going to enthusiastically respond. Dogs are not robots, so there is never any guarantee that they will listen to your cue. But with a lifesaving skill like recall, we are working towards them being as consistent as possible.

Having a reliable recall is especially important if you want to allow your dog off-leash outside of a fenced yard or dog park. Reliable recall is also important in the event of an emergency.

ALTERNATIVES TO OFF-LEASH PLAY

There is no shame in keeping your dog on-leash if you are not confident in their recall. Instead, let them play in fenced areas or consider using a long leash. These may give your companion more opportunity to explore while staying safe. Regardless of how strong your dog’s recall is, it is important to respect all local leash laws. This includes your front yard and anywhere else on your property that is not fenced. Local, state, and national parks will usually also have these regulations in effect.

TRAINING RECALLS

An important part of teaching recall is to make training a game for your dog. Start your training in a slow, low-distraction environment, like inside your house. First, show your dog a toy or a treat, praise them as they are coming to you, then reward them. After a few repetitions, whenever your dog looks at you and starts to move towards you, add in your chosen verbal cue (“come,” “here,” etc.). Make sure to only add in the cue when you are confident your dog is moving towards you. You can slowly up the ante by asking your dog to come before showing them the treat. But be sure to reward with a high-value treat like chicken, cheese, or beef liver when they get to you. Also, try slowly adding distance within your low-distraction environment.

RECALL GAMES

CATCH ME:

While walking your dog on-leash, get their attention, then turn around and run a few steps. As your pup moves with you, say “come!” or another verbal recall. After a few steps, stop and reward with a treat or a toy. Before you run, make sure your dog is paying attention to ensure the leash does not yank at them.

FIND ME:

Once your dog has gotten the hang of recall, you can build speed by calling them from another room. When your dog finds you, offer lots of praise and rewards. This hide-and-seek-like game is a lot of fun for both pups and people!

HOT POTATO:

Take two or more family members or friends and give them high-value treats. Next, stand apart and take turns calling your dog between you. Reward your companion each time they come to the person who called them.

POISONING THE CUE

"Come! COME! Come! Come! Come! Please come!"

If this sounds like your dog's current recall, you may have a "poisoned cue." This generally happens unintentionally and occurs when the cue either has an unclear meaning or takes on a negative association for the dog, so they ignore it. The easiest way to poison a cue is to overuse it by repeating the word over and over without your dog responding. In this case, the best thing to do is to change your verbal cue to something new. For example, if you had previously used "come," you could shift to something like "here" or "close." Go back to basics and start at the beginning when introducing the new recall cue.



RECALL TRAINING TIPS

Do not repeat yourself. If you have to repeat your recall cue, the environment may be too distracting. Alternatively, your dog may not understand the skill well enough for the level you are trying to train them.

Reward eye contact. When you notice your dog is looking at you or has self-selected to be close to you, verbally praise and give them a treat. You may use a lot of treats at first, but you are reinforcing an important lesson to your dog. Being near you and paying attention to you makes good things happen.

Never punish your dog for coming to you. Even if you are frustrated because your pup took their time before coming, always praise a recall.

Reward! When training recalls, use high-value treats and toys for your dog. This is especially true when your dog is learning. Always reward the recall, because you want them to associate coming with getting something great.

Practice recalls daily. Slowly increase the difficulty and level of distraction. Moving too quickly is likely to confuse your dog and may lead to less reliability.

If you require recall in an emergency, do not chase your dog. That is likely to make them continue the "game" by moving away from you. Instead, try running away from your dog to inspire them to chase after you.