

Recall exercises

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Recall exercises

Teaching your dog to come back when called when he/she is off the lead is helpful for his/her safety and your own peace of mind.

Stage 1: Introduce attention and cue

1. Stand close to your dog – just a few steps away. Allow him/her to sniff and explore while you hold the lead loosely.
2. Attract your dog's attention: squeak a toy, rattle a treat bag, make an odd sound.
3. The moment he/she looks toward the sound, give your command to 'come'.
4. Immediately reward with a great treat or toy.
5. Release the dog to sniff and explore.

Repeat this sequence several times per session. Use both good and *great* rewards.

Stage 2: Increase distance

1. When your dog has responded briskly and reliably for 2–3 sessions at close range, increase the distance between you and the dog.
2. The sequence should be the same: attract attention first, then call, then reward. At this point, the reward should be moderately good.
3. For the next few sessions, vary the distance randomly. Sometimes call from a few steps away, sometimes from the end of the long line. Again: attention first, command, then the dog receives good-value reward.

Stage 3: Distractions

1. Add some distractions – a new toy in the area, a friend walking by.
2. Get your dog's attention.
3. Once your dog looks toward you, say 'come'. This time, a great-value reward should be used.
4. Do not use the 'come' command before you have the dog's attention.

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Recall exercises

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Stage 4: Off-lead in a safe area

1. If you have a fenced training area, or if there is no risk of your dog running off into traffic or inadvertently injuring someone, then the same sequence may be followed off-lead.
2. Remove the lead, call from a short distance away, and give a great reward.
3. This time, as you reward, clip the lead on, reward again, then without fussing, unclip the lead and let the dog go and play again.

Stage 5: New location

When the dog is performing reliably, bring him/her to a new location, attach the long lead and start at the beginning.

Stage 6: Active recall

1. Encourage your dog to run – toss a toy, for example.
2. While your dog is active and engaged, use a distraction such as a whistle or bell, then call and reward with a best-value treat.
3. Let the dog go back to play.

Tips

- ✓ DO use a long lead until performance is optimal.
- ✓ DO conduct initial sessions in a quiet area.
- ✓ DO attract your dog's attention before giving any command.
- ✓ DO give commands in a pleasant tone, just loud enough that you are sure that your dog can distinguish your voice from background noise.
- ✓ DO reward your dog whenever he/she returns to you. Initially use a treat or tug game.
- ✓ DO fuss a bit with the collar as you give the reward. This will prepare your dog for times when he/she is off-lead and you have to restrain him/her. *Do not reach for the collar if your dog responds aggressively when excited or when touched!*
- ✓ DO let your dog go back to playing after he/she has responded. If it is time to end a lesson, or time to go home, play some training games while your dog remains close by on a short lead. Ask your dog to follow some commands that he/she enjoys – touch a target, weave through your legs, take a bow.

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- ❌ DO NOT repeat commands. They will become insignificant, part of the background.
 - ❌ DO NOT shout. Your dog may be afraid to return to you if you are angry.
 - ❌ DO NOT chase your dog. He/she may misinterpret the chase as a form of play.
 - ❌ DO NOT inadvertently punish your dog by removing him/her from the play area when he/she obeys. Similarly, do not call your dog and leave immediately to go off to work.
- !** Your dog should remain on the lead if failure to respond could put him/her in danger, or could endanger another person or animal. If there are vehicles nearby, or if the dog chases people or pets, use a lead. No conditioning can protect your dog 100%.