

Building recall in your dog

There are several things that everyone wants in their dog but more than tricks or any other neat task, you want reliable recall in your dog. You want to be able to call your dog and they stop what they are doing and run right to you regardless of what activity they were doing previously.

This lesson will focus on what are the most important aspects of building reliable recall and what are some mistakes that we tend to make that makes your dog's recall not so reliable. We will also give you the steps to start building that recall regardless of your dog's age.

First let's go over why your dog doesn't always come to you when called, here are some mistakes that lots of individuals do that hinders their dogs' recall.

- Think of every time that you are calling your dog and the first thing that comes out of your mouth is the dog's name. Now how are you saying it, more than likely if you are calling them (recall) it is because they are running down the street, running off with something that they shouldn't be, or you are calling them for dinner and they are still playing in the yard.
 - When we call their name, we tend to yell it, the more we try to get the attention of them the more we yell and begin to scream out of frustration. What this is doing is ensuring that they won't come to you or if they do it is out of fear and not a WANT.
- They don't come immediately so we begin to yell at them, call them stupid or some other name (granted they don't speak English or any other language but they can understand tone).
- We begin to chase them, now you have started a game, this to them is extremely fun and will continue to let you chase them until you get tired.

The list continues to go on, just think when you are trying or have tried to call your dog and they don't come, what are you doing, what action or tone are you using etc. When you are trying to build up the recall try and not break it down by yelling, chasing etc. Try these next few steps.

- Make the training as fun as possible, if you are having fun with it and enjoying it they will as well.
- Make it short and to the point so that you don't over train them and burn them out.
- Start out at a short distance so that you don't ask too much too fast.
 - If you start out at a short distance, there is a higher chance of success therefore a higher chance that the training will stick.
- Move only as fast as you and your dog can move, if you ask too much in the beginning you are only setting yourself and your dog up for failure.
- Do not compare other dogs to your current dog, again by doing this you are only setting yourself up for failure.

Now let's start building that solid recall, below are a list of steps to take while starting to build up your dog's recall.

- When you begin any type of training it is always good practice to be in the right mindset, to do this make sure that you're not forcing yourself and or your dog to do it.
- Below are the different types of recall and how to get started and progress to the level that you want.

Distance recall

- Start out small, for this exercise we will start with a short distance of just a couple feet. Go to an area that is controlled, meaning you can control the movement of your dog (they can't run away), use a fenced area like a yard or if you have access to a fenced in tennis court then use that.
- Have them sit and stay and walk to a few feet. Remember not to go too far, if there is a possibility to lose interest in what you are wanting them to do it will happen at a farther distance especially at the beginning of training.
- Call them to you (use their name and the command COME) only say this once. When they get to you praise them with lots of love and ata-boys, if you use treats use them sparingly.
 - Repeat this process several times before moving on to a farther distance.
 - One thing that was not mentioned earlier is that when you are getting them to you and praising them you are also ensuring that you are the most interesting thing out there. Meaning, nothing else that is going on is more interesting to them to include the squirrel that is running across the fence.
 - Make it fun while you are in this controlled environment, add in obstacles, distractions (toys, treats in a container, etc.) this will only reinforce the recall that you are going for.
 - If your dog doesn't come to you when called, do not get frustrated and start yelling at them or start chasing them, calmly walk to them and when you get to them repeat the command to them, if still nothing give their collar a tug and repeat the command.
 - Still not coming to you, turn and walk away from the direction that they are, this will tell them that you are no longer interested in working with them and they will come to you, once they get to you again praise them for the success that they just had.
 - Remember to always praise them for a job well done, if they fail just redirect them and try again. When you get to that point of frustration just stop and end on a good note so you can pick it up later on when you are not frustrated.
- When you get to a point that you are comfortable to move outside of the fenced area or controlled area, ensure that you are confident in your dog's ability to have a solid recall.
 - When you are outside of the fenced area don't set yourself up for failure and try to do distance right away, instead start out at the beginning and do a short distance.

- By starting out at a short distance you are reinforcing what you have already accomplished but now there are more distractions to deal with.
- You won't have to spend a lot of time at this distance and will be able to move fairly quickly.
- Continue to gain distance between each other before calling them back to you. Much the same as the controlled area, start to add in obstacles and other distractions so that you can build up the recall and their ability to ignore everything except you and what you want them to accomplish.
- Repeat this process regularly so that you and your dog are confident in your ability to come when called.
- Now that you have perfected the distance recall you can have the confidence to be out in nature and not be afraid that your dog won't come back to you.

Leash or fixed recall

- So, you have an issue that you don't have any area except the park to practice recall. Well you are in luck, use your leash, using your leash to practice has its advantages. The biggest advantage is that you are controlling a majority of the movement that they have.
 - Start out at a short distance, much the same as the distance recall and at each stage ensure you praise every successful attempt and redirect the failed so that you can ensure they do succeed.
 - Now if they aren't coming to you when they are called then give a quick tug to the leash to get their attention and repeat the command. If they are still hesitant, begin to pull on them until they start to come on their own. As soon as they get to you, praise them for coming to you.
 - Now that you have gotten to the end of the leash, add a long lead to the leash so that you can add more distance, again repeat the entire process above until you are comfortable with the success rate.
- The leash recall has its limits, you can only go as far as the lead that you have available.
- But there is one benefit that you not too many people think of, that is the moving recall.
 - The moving recall is used when you are walking with your dog and they get distracted and start to try and walk off. When your dog does this give a quick correction and call them back to you by using the command that you use for them to be back into the correct position. I personally use the command "HEAL".
 - The more that you reinforce the recall while on the move the more that all other areas you use recall will be reinforced.

Now that you have learned the different types of recall and how to use them it is time to practice them. Remember that the more that you practice recall the stronger that it will become, the stronger that it is the more reliable that it will be when it is the most important to have it. Good and frequent practice make for excellent performance, do (try not) to get frustrated, if you do

stop and end the training. Training with a bad attitude or when frustrated will only make it worse for you and your dog. Reward successful attempts and redirect failed attempts and turn them into successful learning attempts. Make it fun for everyone, like it was stated before, if you are having fun then they will have fun as well.