

# Advanced training: Recall

While teaching recall, it's advisable to temporarily use a training line, flexi lead or a secure area. This

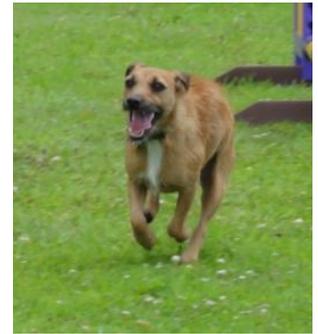
will prevent them from being rewarded for not recalling if they have run off, but will still allow them to express normal behaviour.

It is very common for children to become anxious when their dog is off the lead, if this is relevant to you, please see the problem solving section. It can also be very difficult to teach your dog recall as well as keeping an eye on your children, so recall training should be done 'behind the scenes' when children are at school etc.

**You will need a treat bag with high value treats e.g. hot dog, cheese etc.**

**To begin with, teach with food. A favourite toy can be used later if appropriate.**

**Off lead areas should be free from livestock and regulations where you have to keep dogs on leads. Your dog must have a collar, ID tag and be microchipped.**



## Step 1: Teach your dog to return to you in the home/garden

1. **In a boring place e.g. in the lounge, with your dog off lead reward your dog for coming near you with praise and a treat. Let your dog wander off and when they look at you hold a treat out to encourage them back to you, again praise and reward.**
2. **Change to a different room and repeat step 1.**
3. **When your dog is reliably coming towards you, start to put it on a cue, such as "dogs name' come' or a whistle.**

If your child uses your dog's name a lot you may want to choose a different word or use their nickname, just make sure you are consistent. Use a happy voice but be clear. Say the cue as your dog is on their way towards you so you are building up the association between them coming back and the cue.

4. **Practice this around the house, calling your dog when they are coming to you, praising and treating.**
5. **Build this up to calling your dog when you are in another room during various points in the day when your dog is active and likely to respond. Make sure you reward generously.**
6. **If they are responding well around the house, practice in the garden as this is more distracting, repeat the steps above but don't call your dog mid sniff or if they are likely to need the toilet.**

### Tips at this stage

- If your dog won't leave your side, reward them for coming to you with a treat, then throw a treat away from you.
- End a session with the jackpot, a handful of treats thrown on the floor and remove your treat bag.
- Keep sessions to 3 minutes maximum as you don't want your dog to lose interest.
- Until recall has been taught, try not to call them to you unless you have a reward.
- Don't call your dog to you to take anything off them, instead, swap items by throwing treats near them, then when they have dropped the item and are eating the treats you can calmly take the item.
- If your dog hasn't returned to you when you have called, don't reprimand them, calmly go to them and clip them on the lead or end the session. It's very important that your dog always sees returning to you as a positive experience. It may be that your environment is too distracting, your session went on a little too long or your treats are not motivating enough.

## Step 2: Teach your dog to return to you around distractions

Before you expect your dog to return to you in the park, you must introduce distractions.

1. **Start with a low level of distraction e.g. one toy. With your dog off lead, call them to you using your chosen word/cue.** If your dog responds well, with little hesitation, go up a level in distraction. If they hesitate, stay on the level you are at.
2. **Increase distraction levels e.g. more interesting food or making exciting noises/movements.**
3. **Change to a different room.** In the garden with the children, at human dinner time, if someone is squeaking a toy, kicking a ball etc. Remember to reward generously when your dog recalls to you.
4. **Practice in other people's house or gardens if possible, or a walk in quiet areas.**

## Step 3: Teach your dog to return to you in the park

Using a flexi-lead, training line or a secure area, start to teach recall in a quiet park or go at quiet times so there are fewer distractions.

1. **Allow your dog to explore their environment, don't ask anything of them. You should start to notice they begin to slow down, do less sniffing and may start to look at you a bit more.**
2. **Once they have begun to calm down, when they look at you call your dog to you. Reward and praise them.**
3. **If they are responding without hesitation then start to call them when they aren't looking at you.**
4. **Repeat this for several days going to the same area. You should notice your dog engaging with you quicker, and not hesitating in returning to you.**
5. **Allow your dog to explore between coming back to you, remembering to keep your sessions short.**



### Tips at this stage

If a distraction enters the park and you don't think your dog will be able to recall don't call them, wait it out, reward them hugely for looking away from the distraction or carrying on walking with you.

## Step 4: Recall off lead

If your dog is recalling well from distraction so far you are ready to let them off the lead or drop the training line so it drags along the floor behind your dog.

1. **Allow your dog to have a good explore of the area first. Walk around the park on lead to check your dog is responsive. If they are not responding to recall cues then don't let them off.**
2. **If they respond well and there are no distractions near by, unclip the lead at the same time as putting lots of treats on the floor, encourage them to follow you by dropping treats as you go.**
3. **As you get more confident allow them a little bit more freedom each time, recalling them to you for a reward if they look at you. After a couple of recalls continue the walk as a lead walk.**
4. **Each day practice this to build up your confidence. Allow them to explore further each time. If there are any distractions attach the lead.**

## Step 4: (continued...)

### Tips at this stage

- If your dog goes to investigate a distraction, go to your dog to collect them. Don't reprimand them for not returning to you. If they have ignored your first call, don't continue to call them.
- If you are worried, take someone with you and practice recalls together

## Step 5: Recall around distractions in the park

1. **Introduce distractions slowly, at a distance. Decrease distance once your dog has a solid recall.**
2. **It may be helpful to arrange to meet a friend in the park who you can ask to wait somewhere with their dog on a lead that you can use as a distraction. Gradually move closer to them recalling lots. Clip your dog on the lead and allow your dogs to greet each other.**
3. **To start with it's advisable to keep one dog on the lead while the other is off and swap them over. Once both dogs are responding to recall then they can both be allowed off lead to play.**
4. **If your dog has returned to you after greeting/playing, reward them for coming away with you and staying with you so they aren't tempted to run back over to whomever they have just met.**

### Tips at this stage

- It is always advisable to check with other owners before allowing dogs to greet and play.
- If you have a dog that loves squeaky toys or tennis balls etc., it is a good idea to take these as well should you need to get your dog's attention.



## Overall tips

- **Keep them guessing.** The reward might be cheese or hot dog or kibble, this keeps them motivated to return to you.
- **Reward for recalling then throw pieces near you.** This increases their focus on you and the time they spend being around you.
- **Bigger rewards for better recalls.** Always reward, but reward better recalls with a better reward. If your dog has a favourite toy and doesn't run off with it, you can use this as an extra reward.
- **Reward check ins.** When your dog looks at you, reward them by throwing a treat in their direction. This increases their focus on you.
- **Change your pace.** This will help improve their focus on you.
- **Keep walks interesting,** encouraging them to explore/climb, see 'Scent work' handout for ideas.
- **Use 'life rewards' for good behaviour** e.g. If they really want to say hello to a dog, let them once they have recalled. Giving them permission to go over helps them make the right decisions.
- **Don't just recall them when you need them to return to you.** Practice several a day so you aren't always calling them away from something they would rather be doing.

## Problem solving

There are common problems to teaching recall. Contact us at any point for further advice.

- **My dog runs away when I try to put them back on the lead**

Dogs will associate going back on the lead as the end of the fun. Avoid this by putting them on and off the lead during a walk so the lead doesn't signal the end of your walk. When you recall your dog, put a finger through their collar and reward and hold the lead in your hand then let them go free again.

- **I want to use a whistle, how do I teach this?**

Teaching your dog to recall to a whistle is done by pairing the sound of the whistle to food. At every meal time blow the whistle before putting the food down or if your dog will wait, ask for a wait then blow the whistle as you give them the 'go ahead' to eat. This maintains a strong positive association with the whistle. Children may want to blow the whistle all the time so you may decide that it is something only you will use. Other children may not like shouting so using a whistle may be a good alternative.

- **My dog runs over the entire park to greet other dogs/people**

Revisit recall around distractions, Lesson 2/3 and add in extra steps with recalling away in set up situations from friends dogs or following dogs in the park, teaching your dog self control around them while on the lead. Teaching a 'go see' cue, using the other dog as a reward for the right behaviour is very helpful.

If your dog jumps up at other people, teach what the appropriate behaviour is to do around people separately. Put your dog on the lead and reward them for not jumping as the person walks past.

- **My dog's recall was going well but now their training has regressed**

When dogs reach adolescence, they can become more distracted by their environment, see 'Coping with adolescence' factsheet. Go back to basics with teaching recall. Make sure you have high rewards. Avoid distractions, minimising their chances of making a mistake.

- **My dog recalls in woods but not in the park**

In new areas you will have to re-teach recall until they have generalised it. Reward more often and be more generous. Also in places like parks, dogs can see further, which means they may be more distracted. If there is an area your dog is better in than others, stick there for a while to get them into good habits.