



Courtesy of: Heather Hime  
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Dog Training & Behavior Services

## Reliable Recall

Asking our dogs to come when called immediately, no matter what they are doing, every single time, is asking a lot! We don't even do that! Picture yourself on your computer or watching a tv show and someone asks you to help with dinner, generally your response will be "I'll be right there." This is exactly what most dogs recall looks like... "As soon as I am done sniffing this trail or chasing this squirrel, I will be right there!" Because we are asking so much, we need to make sure the reward is worth the effort! You don't want to work for free, and your dog doesn't either!

**Fine Dining:** The idea of reliable recall training is to pair the word "Come" with the most wonderful things that your dog enjoys for a long period of time. Come = High Value Rewards for a long period of time. This generally means breaking treats up into tiny pieces and feeding them one at a time for 15 seconds while praising and petting your dog (if your dog likes that petting in the particular moment). If your dog is highly motivated by playing with toys, you may also choose to use those as rewards.

**Name Game:** This is a simple, yet very useful game to play with your dog. Start off in a low distraction space, working up to more challenging situations.

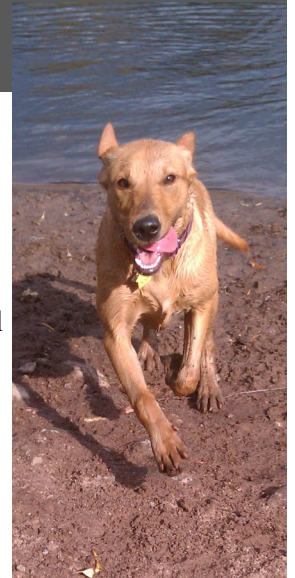
- Say your dog's name, if s/he turns their attention toward you (even if they don't come all the way to you), reward! Do your best to not say your dogs name over and over again if they aren't listening. Pause at least 3-5 seconds in between saying their name. We don't want them to think saying their name 5 times earns a treat. If your dog is struggling, find a lower distraction area and/or use a higher value treat. Continue to add distractions as they improve until they respond to their name each time you say it, no matter what they are doing!

**Name Game + Come = Fine Dining:** Once your dog is reliably responding to his/her name in a particular environment, you will then begin saying their name, and as soon as they begin to move toward you (do not say "come" until they are on their way), say "Come!" and when they get to you, give them a Fine Dining experience. The idea is that we are making "Come" as wonderfully fun as the word "Treat" or the crinkly noise of a treat bag. If they do not respond to their name, pause, maybe move to a less distracting environment, and try again.

**Using Long Lines:** Using long lines not only keeps our dogs safe, but is also gives us the opportunity to properly reinforce a recall if our dog chooses not to listen. A long line is a 30-50' leash. Tie knots every 5-10' to be sure that the long line will stop if you step on it. Avoid grabbing a long line while your dog is moving away and do NOT wrap a long line around your hand. That is asking for a severe rope burn!

### Reinforcing Recalls - Giving Two, Not Three Options:

1. Come when called and wonderfully rewarding things happen for a long time (Fine Dining)
2. Don't come when called and I come get you to take away your freedom (bring in house, make walk on short leash, crate).
3. Don't come when called & I will either keep calling or give up entirely and allow you to continue barking at the neighbor or chasing the squirrel—THIS IS THE ONE OPTION YOU DO NOT WANT TO GIVE YOUR DOG! Have your slippers by the door and long line already attached so that you can be sure to reinforce your recalls.



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## The Rules of Recall Training

### **Never call your dog for unpleasant things**

Unpleasant in their eyes, not yours – ex. calling your dog in from the yard to go to his kennel or calling your dog to leave the dog park. Play is more valuable, and this behavior may even induce a game of you chasing them! Instead, call them several times while playing, reward, then let them continue playing.

### **Don't call your dog if you don't think they will come**

In the beginning stages of training you shouldn't call your dog unless you think they will come. Instead, try just saying their name excitedly without your recall word or go get them with goodies! You don't want them to ever think they can ignore your recall, so don't call unless you can effectively reinforce. If your dog is on a long line you can simply reel them in and take away their environmental reward (being outside, sniffing etc.)

### **Only say your command once & always reinforce recalls**

Do not repeat your command or your dog will learn that they can ignore you or only listen when you "really mean it." Follow through with your long line or by going to get your dog if they do not come on the first call (once you have done the proper initial Come=Fine Dining training).

### **Start training in a low distraction area with minimal distance**

Work your way up to more difficult places and distractions. You should see a 90% or better success rate before making it more difficult.

### **Always reward recalls – Even if you didn't call them!**

Check-ins – Always reward your dog when they come by to check in and see where you are without you calling them. Would you rather have a dog that you have to constantly call back, or would you prefer a dog that sticks by you and checks in often? Always reward your dog for checking in!

