



Sussex North & Brighton Branch
Registered Charity No.206630

RECALL

Recall teaches our dogs to come back to us when they are called. It is a very important, if not the MOST important exercise we can teach our dogs. Teaching our dogs to come back when called is not easy, as you are competing against the sights and smells of the outside world, but it is well worth persevering, as a solid recall could be life saving for your dog one day. You want to know that if your dog starts to run towards a road, or another dog who does not want to be greeted etc, that you can call them and they will come back to you.

STEP 1: Think about the thing that is most rewarding to your dog, such as their favourite treat. This is what we are going to reward our dog with for coming back to us, the most high value treat in the eyes of our dog. This is because we want our dogs to know that if they come back to us they will be getting their favourite thing and so you will have a better chance of competing against whatever your dog may be engaging with.

STEP 3: Pick a recall word, such as "come" or "here". Remember our dog's name is NOT a recall word. Saying our dog's name should just mean look at me, as I'm going to ask you to do something. This is for safety reasons. For example, if your dog runs across a busy road, you want to be able to say their name and ask them to wait so you can safely go to retrieve them. If their name is their recall word, you run the risk of your dog running back across the road to you when you say their name and by doing so they will be putting themselves at further risk.

STEP 4: Starting in a low distraction environment, such as in your home or garden, we are going to ask our dog to recall over a very short distance to start. There is no point in trying to get them to recall over a large distance, if we can't even get our dog to come to us from a couple of feet away.

STEP 5: Say your dog's name and when they look at you, show them you have a tasty treat and hold it up in the air. Then move your hand down to the floor and put the treat onto the floor between your feet. As you do this, say your recall word, such as 'come' or 'here'. The reason we are combining the word with the movement of the arm to place the treat on the floor, is that dogs are extremely visual and it is great to have a visual cue as well as a verbal one. Particularly when asking our dogs to recall over a great distance. Also the reason we put the treat between our feet, instead of handing it to our dog, is that we want to encourage them that our recall word means come all the way to me, not just snatch the treat from our hands and run off again.

STEP 6: Once your dog has come to you and is eating the treat, bend down and give them a stroke or rub around the harness and collar areas. This will teach our dogs that every time I call you I am going to touch you where the lead will go back on, but it doesn't mean that the lead will go on every time. This prevents our dogs from learning that the recall word means the lead goes on, which means the walk and the fun is over and prevents them from keeping their distance from us to delay the end of the walk.

STEP 6: Take a few steps away from your dog and then repeat. Over time you can increase the distance you ask your dog to recall across. You can also increase distractions slowly.

STEP 7: Once your dog has started to understand that their recall word means come to you and they get rewarded, you can take the exercise out into the real world. Remember to start in quieter locations first as our dogs won't be able to cope and listen to you if you take them to a busy park straight away.

STEP 8: When taking this exercise outside for the first time, it would be advisable to have them on a long training line so you know that if the recall doesn't work, you still have hold of them. Long lines are great, as there is no tension on your dog's harness that an extendable lead would give and so it imitates the feeling of being off lead. Make sure you ALWAYS attach a long line to a harness and not a collar. If your dog picks up speed and is then stopped by the long line attached to a collar, this can cause horrendous damage to

your dog's throat. If you do not wish to use a long line, then make sure you are only practising recall, in secure fenced off areas. Pictures of long lines below.



STEP 9: When you feel your dog has a reliable enough recall to let them off lead for the first time, make sure you only do it in a safe enclosed area for the first time. That way there will be no chance of your dog running away and getting lost or getting injured.

STEP 10: Once your dog is fully off lead, practise recalling them to you a few times throughout the walk, putting their lead back on, walking a few metres and then letting them off again. This will teach your dog that we don't just recall them at the end of the walk and the lead doesn't just go on at the end of the walk, meaning fun time is over for the dog. This will make sure they won't stop recalling to you due to negative associations with the recall word.

TOPSTIPS

- Always reward a recall. As it can be potentially life saving, it should always be rewarded to keep the recall reliable.
- When practising this, make sure that if your dog is sniffing something, you wait for them to be done before saying their name to get them to look at you and then using your recall word. When first teaching this, your recall word won't be as strong as we

need it to be yet, so expecting your dog to listen to it when they are exploring with their nose is setting ourselves up for failure.

- If you have a bad walk and your dog runs away, make sure you still reward your dog for coming back to you, even if it has been a long time! If we tell our dogs off, or punish them when they eventually come back to us, they will be less likely to come back to you next time and it will poison your recall word.

If you need further help, you can find a dog trainer by copying and pasting the link below into your web browser:

https://abtc.org.uk/practitioners/?_abtc_role=animal-training-instructor