



# Recall Training

Teaching your dog recall is not only necessary for off-lead walking, but also hugely important when leading them away from undesirable items or danger.

Start by selecting your recall cue. This could be a single word, short phrase or a sound (whistle). Ensure you pick something that will only be used for that command. Make sure everyone in the household is using the same cue as consistency is key! Using the steps below, slowly build on each skill, and only move onto the next step when you have a consistently reliable response.

## 1 INDOORS

- Start training indoors in a distraction free environment.
- Begin with some of your dog's normal kibble and feed a piece every time your dog makes eye contact, so they associate engaging with you with a reward (you could feed your dog's entire meal in this way if needed!)
- Continue this same exercise but start walking around the room to encourage your dog to follow you (the beginnings of recall).
- Next, with some tasty treats (a higher value reward than kibble), standing a few steps away from your dog, use your recall cue whilst gaining eye contact and give a treat when your dog comes to you.
- Begin with small distances and increase these gradually until you can practice recall from a few rooms away.
- As you progress you can start to add in distractions (such as a favourite toy or another person).

## 2 OUTDOORS

- This space should be securely enclosed and not too big (most gardens are suitable for this step).
- You may wish to use a long training line to start with.
- Repeat the exercise, ensuring you only give the command once (repeating it can reduce its impact) and rewarding every time.
- If your dog is less responsive outdoors, increase the drive by making it into a game (such as by giving your recall cue and running back a few steps in the other direction). This increases your dog's excitement and urgency to respond to the command.

## 3 THE BIG WIDE WORLD!

- The final step is about reinforcing the command in a larger (and often more distracting) environment, such as a large enclosed field or out on a walk.
- Decide on a 'zone' you are comfortable with your dog being free to roam in (e.g., a 5-10 metre radius of you).
- When they reach the perimeter of this zone, give the recall cue to ensure they don't venture off too far.
- Don't set your dog up for failure - in the earlier stages of training recall outside, avoid calling them over to you when they are heavily distracted or concentrating on something else (e.g., playing with another dog or sniffing something interesting). Wait until there is a break in their activity/concentration before using your recall cue and you will have more chance of success!
- Remember, even dogs with excellent recall should always be put on leads if they are not in a securely enclosed area to ensure they don't come into harm (such as, escaping into traffic).



# Top tips:



- Use a whistle or a word that is not commonly used around your dog to train the recall cue. Using your dog's name may seem logical, but it is not the best choice because you will often use their name in conversation around them which will desensitise their recall response over time.
- Pick high value, tasty treats for their training, to increase the drive for the reward. Make sure any treats given are earned and not given ad lib as this will reduce the value of the reward.
- Never punish! If your dog does not respond to the command don't tell them off, as this will make them less likely to return to you in future. Instead work on consistently rewarding and reinforcing the positive behaviour.
- Keep your tone positive (higher pitches are often better).
- Don't approach your dog after giving the recall cue. This can result in your dog walking away and makes the recall message unclear.
- When working on recall in larger spaces, try practicing between two people. This reminds the dog to leave one person with treats (i.e. a distraction) to the other when given the command, as they are more driven by the reward (treats, praise) than the distraction.
- For dogs that aren't food orientated, try a favourite toy as their recall reward.

