

Training Tip Tuesday: Paper Plate Recall

Since we've dedicated May to reviewing our recall – today's training tip will feature some of my favorite recall games! I'm going to skip explaining why we teach a recall – hopefully you all realize it's one of the most important skills your dog can have! There are many, many good reasons you want your dog to come to you when you call!

It takes a LOT of practice to get a rock solid recall. Some dogs are better at it than others. Age, Breed, Drives, Past Experiences all make a difference. Your recall should always, always, always be a fun, positive experience for your dog – so it makes perfect sense to teach it by playing really fun games!

Call and Send: This is easy. Wherever you are, whatever you (and your dog) are doing – practice calling him in to you, praising him up – then sending him right back to doing whatever he was doing. I do this a lot on our morning hikes; call my pups in, reward them, and send them on their way. This helps your dog learn that coming in to you doesn't end the fun; checking in just gets an added bonus to fun he's already having!

Paper Plate Recall: This takes a little set up. You need a paper plate and a bunch of yummy treats. If your dog won't hold a sit while you place the food; get someone else to put it out while you hold him, or tether him somewhere. All you have to do is put a plate down a few feet away (not too far; 15-20' is perfect). Place a couple of treats on the plate. Release your dog to the plate. The moment your dog gets done eating; call him back to you and reward! You are not trying to prevent him from getting the treats. You want him to reach the plate, and gobble up whatever you've put down. There is a lot of dog psychology in this exercise; but to sum it up – he's waiting for permission from you to get something he wants, and after he's investigated he's checking back in with you for even more great stuff!

Orientation Game: This is another 'check in game'; I've used variations of it for many skills, even loose leash walking. The idea is pretty simple. You toss a lower value treat away to get the dog moving away from you; the moment he looks back at you, or comes back into you – you praise and reward with something better.

All of these games can be done indoors or out. You can tailor the games to the level of your dog by decreasing (or increasing) the distraction level. If your dog is still just learning; make sure to keep a long line on, so if he decides he has other plans when you call him; you can provide some guidance!

Remember – you have to be more interesting than the environment; so get yourself an extra cup of coffee and don't be afraid to be silly! Your dog will thank you.

<https://youtu.be/X-OGY4eAhlk>