

## Training Tip Tuesday: Fixing your Recall

We have done a number of videos on recall games, and building your recall up – and those are great to practice! But what do you do if you’ve broken your recall? If you say “Fifi – Come!” and you get ‘the look’ as your dog continues doing her own thing?

The first step is to recognize it! Then take a look at how you might have broken it. Do you call your dog only to put him inside then leave for work? Or when you’re done at the dog park, and ready to head home? Has he associated coming in to you with his fun ending? Perhaps your dog ran off, and you called and called and called – and when he finally returned, you corrected him for taking off in the first place. Whatever it is – identifying it will help the process!

Next; depending on how ‘broken’ your cue is, you may want to consider picking a new word. If Come! no longer works, you can choose something else, in any language that amuses you. (Here! Hier, Ici, Viens, Ke mne, Kom Hier, Ettul) If you do pick a new word; make sure you save it and only use it to mean one thing! Start from scratch, and teach the meaning with consistent reinforcement. Do not use it if you can’t reinforce it! (See our 10 Rules of Recall for more tips on teaching a solid recall. If you need a copy, feel free to PM me with your email addy and i will send it along)

If your dog has made a negative association with coming in close; you can undo it. Spend several days not asking him to! Carry around some yummy rewards, or a favorite toy. Any time he chooses to approach – reward it! Don’t try to pick him up, or latch on to his collar. Don’t even reach out for him. Don’t cue him. Let him make up his own mind. Every time he approaches; toss him a treat then let him retreat or leave or do whatever he wants. He will start to trust you.

Once he is approaching you without being silly about it, you can graduate to the next step. Holding the treat in one hand, let him nibble while you reach out and briefly touch him with the other hand. Don’t grab for him! Just a quick pat on the shoulder will do. You can gradually build up the time you touch him. You are laying the foundation for reaching out for his collar later and not having a dog that plays the duck and dive game as you try to put on a leash.

Now that he’s interested in approaching you, and has built up a little trust – you can start adding your cue. Get your pup enthusiastic with a treat or a toy – then step a few feet away. As your dog runs to catch up; use your word! Wait until he’s actually moving towards you before you say anything. If he’s distracted, wait until he re-engages with you. You don’t want to say your word, and have him choose to ignore it. This should be lots of fun for your pup – you want him associating hearing that word with moving towards you and getting a great reward. If you’re having a bad day – save training for a later time. This has to be super positive for the dog!

Teaching a solid recall to begin with takes a good deal of time – fixing a broken recall takes even longer. Be patient, and consistent and build your dog up. Remember – its not just about teaching the word, but undoing whatever caused him to stop recalling in the first place! The biggest thing you can do to help ensure your success is to make sure you never use your recall word when you can’t reinforce it.

<https://youtu.be/znwvCsWtX8s>