



10 Rules of Recall

1. There is a statistic that states it takes 9000 successful recalls to imprint the reaction on your dog. Every time you have a failed attempt, the counter goes back to 0. SO – don't call your dog unless you know he's going to come!
2. Reward your dog **every** time he comes – like it's the best thing he's ever done. Praise, play, treats – at least a minute. You have to make it worth his while to be with you, and not chasing the squirrel or whatever. No cheerio rewards!
3. Recalls must always be positive. No matter how much you want to wring his neck – you can't let him know that! If I were screaming at you, would you want to come over and hang out with me? If I managed to persuade you to come over, and then yelled at you – would you want to come near me again?
4. Don't muddy your recall word with casual expressions. Come on, Let's go, This way, Hurry Up... are all fine to provide general direction...but Sunny, Come! Should mean he comes and makes contact with you (and ideally sits in front of you)
5. Do not use your recall word when you can't enforce it – especially during training. (back to rule 1)
6. Do not repeat your recall word over and over. You will teach him to ignore it. You must get some sort of reaction from your dog before saying it again. (Head turn, stop in movement, etc..). This is actually true for all commands... if you ask him for something, and he doesn't do it – you can say no, you can try to get his attention, but you don't want to repeat the command over and over, without some input from him.
7. Train in the voice you're going to use. If he learns to recall with a soft, sweet 'come here buddy', and then he gets out and you shriek 'Ahhh! Come! Get Over Here!' in an octave that shatters glass; he's not going to have any idea what you want. Practice training in a voice loud enough to be heard, but not scary... and use that voice always!
8. Practice recall games. Make them really fun. Find the things that makes your dog come running to you. Most dogs have a pretty good hunt/chase drive – so toss something for him to go after, then run the opposite way and see if you can get him to chase you...that kind of stuff
9. Learn to be more exciting than the rest of the world! More interesting than the squirrel, more entertaining than the dead thing on the side of the trail, more enticing than the bunny rabbit tracks in the thicket.
10. Learn to read your dog. You have a far better chance of getting a good recall **before** he takes off. Once he's in full drive, its going to be hard to get his attention. Call him in to you before there's trouble. Don't wait to see his tail!

Don't forget about your Look and/or Stop commands. They help with recall too – and are always good to reinforce!

Recall Games

Restrained Recall: 2 or more people. One person holds him by the chest, while the other gets him really jazzed up. When he's really eager to go – the person jazzing him uses his recall word, and the person holding immediately lets go. You should get a dog that falls over himself to get to you.

Hide & Seek: start simple and build on it. You can have one person hold him, or have him sit and wait while you duck out of sight, then call him. This will tap into his hunt drive, and make 'hunting you down' a fun game

Runaway: one person holds, the other person runs a short distance, being very exciting. Don't go too far, then turn and call. The holder immediately releases.

Snap & treat: Good couch exercise. Snap the clip on the leash and give him a treat. (you're not actually attaching it, you're just getting him to associate that sound with a positive reward) this will avoid him learning the duck & dive maneuver. You can also do this with his name. Just say his name, and give him the treat. Easiest chore ever!

Rewind: Done on leash. While you're walking, suddenly slow down. When he gets ahead of you, start running backwards. The moment he turns his head to see what you're up to – Say Sunny, Come!

Call & Release: When you're out playing, practice calling him in to you, then sending him back to whatever he was doing. Dogs are smart. If you only ever call them to come inside, or put on a leash, they quickly learn that 'Come' means 'Fun's over'. If you practice interrupting them, then let them get right back to whatever they were doing, they learn that coming into you isn't the end of their fun. This helps create the dog that periodically 'checks in' with their owner when they're out and about.

Collar Grab: Keep one hand empty, and one hand full of treats. Get your pup over to you and reach for his collar with the empty hand. Just as you're about to grab it, give him a treat with the other hand. Repeat. He will learn that your hand coming towards him is a wonderful thing and won't duck/dive to avoid it!

Paper Plate Recall: Place a paper plate on the ground 10-15' away. Have an assistant place some food (one or two small treats) on the plate. If you don't have an assistant, either stay your dog and go put food, or hold your dog away while you place the food and walk away. Release your dog to go eat the food. When he FINISHES – call him excitedly to you and treat/praise. The goal of this exercise is NOT to stop him from getting to the plate, or call him off food. You released him – he deserves his reward. The idea is to send the dog away, let him get engaged in something else, then call him back to you.

I choose YOU! For many people, their dogs have a pretty good recall unless they have been enticed by something else – like a squirrel. Since you can't start under threshold with a squirrel (and I don't know any squirrels that are cooperative enough for recall games!) you need to start simple. Find an enticing reward that's still pretty low value. I like popcorn. Put a small pile of popcorn on the floor just out of your dog's reach. Hold him on a leash. Let him see the popcorn and pull towards it – but don't let him have it. Don't say anything. Don't do anything. At some point, your dog is going to turn and look at you. PRAISE! Tell him it's the best choice he's ever made. Be super excited, and reward with a really high value treat. As you practice this game, gradually increase the distractor. Your dog will learn that choosing you over *whatever* is the best thing he can do and gets him an awesome reward. This will eventually translate to choosing you over squirrels, etc... when you try to recall him!

