

# Dog Agility Pre-School

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## Reliable Recall Training Part II Emergency Recall

### Overview:

We're training both an "everyday" or ordinary recall and a special, "emergency" recall. Refer to your handout for Part I. In that phase, we lay down a foundation, in which your dog finds checking in with you and coming to you to be very reinforcing. Not only that, your dog considers there to be no penalty to coming to you. When your dog comes to you on his own or when you call, your dog does not ever experience P- or even P+, but only R+.

Remember that the "ordinary" recall is a cue such as "come!" or "here!" and we train it as a "call-off" recall. To train this properly, the cue COME means to your dog "When you see a distraction, check in with me first for a nice reward, and then you can go back to what you were doing". Soon the distraction becomes a cue for "Mom/Dad has something even better, I need to go check in and get my reward".

The foundation training has as its principle: You train your recall as a "call-off/go-back" far more often than you actually use it as "come to me and forget whatever else you wanted to do."

We'll employ that principle in Part II: you train your emergency recall many, many more times (100x or more) than you will actually use it.

### Principles:

**Reinforcement:** the key to both everyday and the Really Reliable Recall (RRR).

1. **VALUE:** Use highest value reinforcements = what your dog finds reinforcing, not what you think should be most reinforcing, or what's convenient. Use your list of ranked reinforcements for your guide. Next are some important tips about reinforcements:

2. **FOOD reinforcements:** Use real, healthy, soft food. Don't use readymade dog treats. Real Meat is best, for example roast beef, chicken, liver, salmon. Hot dogs are not Real Meat. Most dogs don't maintain enthusiasm for commercial, name brand dog treats. Food that crunches is not sufficient for the RRR.

3. **NON-FOOD reinforcements:** can include special toys, toys that drive them wild. Examples would be toys made out of some previously live animal, like rabbit skin. Another strong reinforcer for many dogs is YOU. Not only are they social beings, but our DAPS way of training means you control as many of the dog's reinforcements as possible. The better the trainer you are, the higher % of reinforcers you appear to control. Be really responsive to your dog. Play with your dog yourself. If your dog tolerates roughhousing and likes it, do that. If you dog likes to chase you, do that.

**TIP:** Remember: if you are not controlling reinforcements, you are not training (i.e., modifying behavior).

4. **BE GENEROUS:** My experience is that people are unbelievably stingy with their dogs when it comes to reinforcements. I'm not sure why, but humans are often that way with each other too. Be generous, be sincere, be wild with enthusiasm when your dog comes to you during RRR training, and use REALLY GOOD TREATS AND TOYS.

Rules of the Really Reliable Recall game (basis of your emergency recall):

**RRR Signal.**

1. Choose a word/signal that isn't like anything else you would say but make sure it's the first thing that comes out of your mouth under stress and maybe even extreme duress. Examples can be ZOOM, WhOOO HOOOO.
2. You can and probably should choose both a word and a mechanical sound like a whistle to condition for your emergency recall. Why a whistle? When dogs are truly distracted, such as when they are "locked on" or in drive, such as prey or sex drive, they literally and truly become deaf. Experiments on cats with electrodes in their brains show that the brain receives a signal when the cat hears a bell under ordinary conditions, but when the cat is shown a mouse, the sound is no longer translated from the ear to the brain. The cat is deaf. If you know your dog is going to a situation where it's likely they will get into a drive state, take a whistle. A shepherd's whistle or a pea-less whistle is best because they produce pure tones. A sharp, pure tone can pierce this cognitive deafness, like a clicker does. The sound is not processed in the cognitive part of the brain so the dog can still hear it when he/she is in drive.
3. When you use this RRR signal, as with all of your cuing:
  - Use your cue ONLY. Don't say it in a long sentence. If your ordinary recall cue is COME don't say "Fido, come-on here boy, that's a boy, get over here good dog" Dog hears "blah blah blah blah blah blah blah" which is how humans sound to a dog a thousand times a day when you are talking on the phone, watching TV, talking to friends, blah blah blah blah.
  - Please stop cuing "Dog name, Recall cue"= Fido, COME. If you must say your dog's name say COME Fido. You are backchaining so that the new recall cue predicts the familiar attention-getting name cue.
  - Use your cue in a tone of voice that is what you'd use if your dog was running into the wrong end of the tunnel on your MACH run or into the street in front of an on-coming car.
  - SAY THE CUE ONLY ONCE. If I had a dollar for every time I hear multiple and escalated cuing in class when then the dog fails to respond, I wouldn't have to charge you for lessons.
4. Practice the RRR three times a day.
5. Call your dog with the RRR cue at home first and ONLY when your dog is going to come to you. You are 100% certain your dog is going to come. For example, use the cue when your dog is already coming to you.
6. Use a friend to do restrained recalls: a helper holds your dog and then use the RRR cue, run away etc etc. Make the game really really fun.
7. Reward each step of the way:
  - The most important step is the first turn of your dog's head toward you. Use a clicker. Click the very first moment your dog decides to come to you. Most people click way too late. Clicking when your dog gets to you is a total waste of the clicker, so don't bother at that point.
  - As the dog comes to you, run, grab the dog's toy, dance, sing, coo, whatever turns your dog on. Make the recall really fun. You are tapping into the dog's play, prey and chase drives.
  - When the dog gets to you, offer and engage the dog with the reinforcement for **30 seconds**. Feed the food in teeny little bits. Feed and pet, feed and coo, feed and roughhouse. Get out the world's best toy, make it come alive. Keep it attached to you.
8. OK, so your dog doesn't come to you. DON'T REPEAT THE CUE. If you repeat your cue, you are teaching your dog to ignore you. Just go get your dog. Show your dog the treat/toy. Some people would give them a bit of it. I recommend this: show your dog the treat and tease the dog with it "See what you could have had?" Have the helper hold your dog. You run away, then as your dog is straining/screaming to get to you, then call your dog again.
9. Train, train, train, but rarely use the RRR. For day to day recalls, use your call-off cue, i.e., COME.
10. Gradually—GRADUALLY-- increase the level of distractions you are training under. Start at home in your living room, move to your back yard, your front yard, your walk route, class..... then in front of rabbits, dead birds, other dogs, kids on skate boards...

Summary:

There are 3 reasons why the RRR training fails, in most dogs.

1. You repeat the cue regularly when your dog ignores you.
2. You don't practice. You can tell me you're doing it three times a day, but I don't care. It's your dog and your recall.
3. You have lousy reinforcements. You are boring, your food is boring, your toys are boring. Or your treats/toys are great but you are stingy with them.

A corollary of 3 is that you are training too quickly. You skip the low-distraction period and try this with distractions that are too highly ranked compared to your reinforcements. Start at home with low distractions.

A corollary of 2 is that you don't take your training on the road, but only train at home. At some point you *have* to increase distractions.

This training will transfer over to your call-off recall training. When you call your dog with any cue, your dog will think...maybe this is it!! The Big One! Keep training your ordinary recall as a call-off recall, as we did in Part I. Use your ordinary recall 90-95% of the time you want your dog to come to you.

Reference:

Really Reliable Recall DVD by Leslie Nelson