



Potter's Angels Rescue

Teaching your dog the Emergency Recall Command

No moment in a dog owner's life is more frustrating (or possibly frightening) than the moment you need your dog to come to you and it refuses. When this happens, a dog owner realizes that even his well-trained dog isn't completely perfect. Even if your dog would respond your command on an ordinary day, you may run into a situation that distracts or upsets your dog to the point where it forgets to listen to you. This can be unsafe for your dog and for others, especially if it is chasing the neighbor's cat into the street or going after the stranger on a motorcycle. These are the moments when you need a safety-net, an emergency recall that you know will get your dog to return to you without hesitation.

Teach your Dog to Come

- Say your dog's name. When it responds by looking toward you, reward it with a treat and praise. This helps your dog learn its name, so that when you say "Come, Rusty," it knows you are talking to it.
- Ask your dog to stay and then take a few steps away from it. Say "come," followed by your dog's name. If necessary, show it a treat to convince it to come to you. Reward and praise your dog enthusiastically for coming to you. This teaches the dog that coming to you is a positive experience.
- Move farther and farther away from your dog before calling it to you. Eventually you should try calling it from other rooms in the house, or call it while it is playing in the yard. Calling your dog from different locations helps it to practice with distraction or without the visible promise of a treat. Call your dog randomly as well, so that it learns to come at all times.
- Withhold treats as your dog becomes more reliable at coming when you call. Reward it every other time or every fourth time, until it gets used to coming without a snack. Continue to praise your dog each time it comes, however. Coming should always be a positive experience for your dog, so that it will want to keep returning to you.

Emergency Recall

- Choose a new word to use for your emergency recall. This is a code word of sorts that you will only use with your dog when you practice the recall or in an emergency. Don't overuse this word, or your dog will become desensitized to it. You can also use a dog whistle, though you will always need it with you when you are out with your dog.

- Prepare an extra tasty treat for your dog. Don't use the same reward you use when you do basic training. Instead, use cooked bits of meat such as steak or chicken, or prepare some hot dogs or bite-sized chunks of cheese.
- Repeat the same process you used when training your dog to come. Your dog should know its name, so you can skip the name-recognition step. This time, reward your dog with a special treat. This raises the stakes for your dog and teaches it that coming will result in something extra special when you use your chosen recall command.
- Stop practicing the emergency recall daily once your dog responds reliably. Instead, practice it randomly a few times a month to keep your dog from forgetting. Don't overuse this command once your dog has learned it. When you do practice, never stop rewarding your dog with an extra yummy treat for coming to the emergency recall. The promise of that reward will entice your dog to return to you even when your basic come command fails.

Recall Command Tips

The following behaviors will severely hinder your dog's training. If you have been trying to teach your dog to come and feel like you're beating your head against a brick wall, and any of these behaviors sound familiar, you've pinpointed the problem. Correct yourself and your dog might just shine with trainable talent!

- **Never** scold or punish your dog for coming to you. This includes once they have finally returned to you after being gone for hours. Don't do something your dog dislikes after it comes to you. Coming should always be a positive experience for your dog, or it will hesitate to come next time you call.
- Don't train your dog to associate unpleasant experiences with coming when called. Do you only use the recall command to make your dog come to you after a fun time at the dog park? If this is the case, your dog doesn't think "come" means he should run to you excitedly; he thinks it means "playtime's over." Also, don't use your recall command before giving your dog a bath, or clipping his nails. Any time you're going to do something unpleasant with your dog, don't use the recall, just go get him or lure him to you with a little snack. Never, ever punish your dog after he comes to you.
- Never use your recall command with an angry tone, and never say it more than once. If you say "Fido, Come" in a friendly and pleasant voice, and he doesn't come, then you say it again, and he still doesn't come, and then you use your super angry, "master means business" voice and scream "FIDO, COME," and he finally comes, so you praise him, you've taught him two things. First of all, he's learned that he can ignore your command without circumstance, and secondly, he's learned that he only really has to come when you use your mean voice. You don't want to have to call your dog in an ugly, harsh voice every time you want him to come to you. If he doesn't come the first time, go get him.
- Never call your dog if you don't think he will come and you can't enforce the action. If Fido's in the middle of a fight with another dog, or snout-deep in something really tasty, there's a good chance he won't come when he's called, especially before he's really got the command down. Calling him when he isn't going to respond only trains him that he

doesn't have to come every single time. Do not praise or treat unless it is on your terms. If your dog wanders up demanding attention, pets, or snuggles, ignore him; or if you want to pet him, make him perform a task like a sit stay, a down, or a paw shake. The idea is that everything good comes from you, and only comes when the dog earns it. The same goes with food; never reward begging. If you give your dog treats and attention whenever he demands it, why should he perform tasks that he doesn't feel like performing for treats and attention? For a recall command to work properly, your dog must trust you. If your dog is fearful or dubious of you, it will be significantly more difficult to get him to come to you with any consistency. Develop a loving, trusting relationship with your dog by exerting yourself as the pack leader, giving lots of pets and love, playing with him every chance you get, and taking a couple of nice, long walks together every day. Furthermore (and this should go without saying) never lay your hands on your dog in anger. Depending on your personal training strategy, a bop on the nose or the tush with a rolled up newspaper might be ok, but there is a big difference between a little pop and actually hitting or kicking your dog. If you want your dog to trust and respect you, and not just fear you, DO NOT HIT YOUR DOG!