

Coming When Called

One of the greatest joys of owning a dog is to go for a walk in a park or the woods and let him run, knowing he will come when he is called. A dog that does not come when called is a prisoner of his leash and if he gets loose, a danger to him and others.

5 Rules For a Good Recall

Rule #1: Exercise, exercise, exercise.

Many dogs do not come when called because they do not get enough exercise. At every chance, they run off and make the most of it by staying out for hours at a time.

Consider what your dog was bred to do and that will tell you how much exercise he needs. Just putting him out in the backyard will not do. You will have to participate. Think of it this way, exercise is as good for you as it is for your dog.

Rule #2: Whenever your dog comes to you, be nice to him.

One of the quickest ways to teach your dog NOT to come to you is to call him to punish him or do something the dog perceives as unpleasant. Most dogs consider being given a bath or a pill unpleasant. When he needs either, go and get him instead of calling him to you.

Another example of teaching your dog not to come is to take him for a run in the park and call him to you when it's time to go home. Repeating this sequence several times, teaches the dog "the party is over!" Soon, he may become reluctant to return to you when called because he is not ready to end the fun.

You can prevent this kind of unintentional training by calling him to you several times during his outing, sometimes giving him a treat, sometimes just a pat on the head. Then let him romp again.

Rule #3: Teach him to come when called as soon as you get him, no matter how young he is.

Ideally, you acquired your dog as a puppy and that is the best time to teach him to come when called. Start right away. But remember, sometime between the 4th and 8th

months of age, your puppy will begin to realize there is a big, wide world out there. While he is going through this stage, it is best to keep him on leash so that he does not learn he can ignore you when you call him.

Rule #4: When in doubt, keep him on leash.

Learn to anticipate when your dog is likely not to come. You may be tempting fate trying to call him once he has spotted a cat, another dog, or a jogger. Of course, there will be times when you goof and let him go just as another dog appears out of nowhere.

Resist the urge to make a complete fool of yourself by bellowing "come" a million times. The more often you holler "come," the quicker he learns he can ignore you when he is off leash. Instead, turn your back to him and calmly walk away. When he catches up to you, give him a treat as you put your left hand under his chin, palm facing up, through his collar and then put him on leash. Do not get angry with him once you have caught him or you will make him afraid of you and he will run away from you when you try to catch him the next time.

Rule #5: Make sure your dog always comes to you and lets you touch his collar before you reward him with a treat or praise. Touching his collar prevents the dog from developing the annoying habit of playing "catch" - coming towards you and then dancing around you, just out of reach.

Aunt Laura's Together K9

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