

## The Recall - Come Cue

Teaching your puppy to come when called is probably the most important cue you can teach her. It very well might save her life one day, or at least keep her out of trouble. In the beginning, our puppies come willingly, for they want to be with us all the time. They enjoy playing with us and thrive on our attention. But, teaching a good reliable recall is easier said than done, and as our puppy grows, she will want to leave our side more and more to explore her evermore expanding world around her. Although you will be spending more time proofing this cue than any other cue, and it's reliability may fall apart from time to time or take longer to progress, it is well worth the time and effort. Before you begin, there are a few basic guidelines to remember about teaching "Come."

### Recall Fundamentals

- 🐾 **Be the Cookie** - Make sure to establish that coming to you is the "best thing ever!" Any time your puppy comes to you, whether you called him or not, always acknowledge that you appreciate it. You can do this with petting, smiles, praise, affection, play or treats. Consistently reinforcing your puppy coming to you ensures that she will want to continue to "check in" with you. When practicing the recall, make yourself fun and exciting and rewarding to come to. "Be the cookie." This will ensure that the cue does not deteriorate over time.
- 🐾 **Recall for Good Reasons** - Never use the cue word for the recall when you are going to do something she doesn't like, like a bath, going into the crate, coming inside, or anything else that your puppy will see as not fun. This is a guaranteed way to create a negative association with the cue and have your puppy not listen to you and choose something else she thinks is more fun. The best way to practice recall is to make it feel like a game, and in the end, allow your puppy to go do something super fun - like play (and with you!).
- 🐾 **No Recall for Punishment** - No matter what happened moments ago, coming to you must always be rewarded and followed by good things. If you catch yourself calling your puppy because you are angry with her for some reason, you must still praise her and reward her for coming to you. So be ready to "switch gears" and save any consequences or punishment for next time.
- 🐾 **When in Doubt, Don't Cue** - If you need your puppy to come to you, but you are not sure if she will listen, use alternative methods and phrases: "pup, pup, pup" or "this way" or "here" or some other obedience cue like a sit-stay. Attention getting sounds like kissing sounds, whistles, clapping or patting your legs, etc. are good choices, too. Inviting gestures such as backing up or running away from your puppy and encouraging her to chase you is a good technique to use. Puppies find it hard to resist chasing after a running person, especially if it is mom or dad.
- 🐾 **Use High Value Rewards** - Always reward the recall with your puppy's highest valued rewards. Use very special treats like chicken, hot dog, cheese, or other very tasty treat. But, you can also use a squeaky ball or toy if it is one that your puppy treasures above all else. Additionally, real life rewards, like calling your puppy for meal time, is a great way to practice and reinforce the cue.
- 🐾 **One Mistake Means Back to Kindergarten** - Always remember to go back to basics if one single mistake is made and your puppy ignores the cue. You don't want your puppy to think that coming to you is optional. Recall is a cue that benefits well from reviewing basics from time to time.
- 🐾 **Reliability is Never Guaranteed** - Until your dog has settled into adulthood (about 2-3 years of age for Aussies), you can't expect the recall to be very reliable. When out in open areas where you can't control the distractions and your puppy can take off or wander to areas that may not be

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safe, always keep your pup on some kind of lead for safety, just in case. It is better to be safe than sorry. Until you have been able to proof your dog's recall under each particular situation, you cannot assume your puppy will come when called. Additionally, dogs are dogs and you must always remember that there is no such thing as a 100% reliable recall. Freedom is a privilege that must be earned. In order for your dog to be off leash, he must have the impulse control and obedience to come and go as you command.

### Before Training Begins

- ✓ When you start training using treats, **make sure that your puppy is good and hungry**. This will ensure that she is motivated to work for food.
- ✓ **Use high value treats that your dog loves**. Chicken, beef, peanut butter, goat yogurt... are typically great high value treats. You can also "tweak" the Life's Abundance Training Treats and soak them in a tiny bit of chicken broth or salmon juice to give them a higher value. Do this in small batches so you use them up each day of practice. Save these special rewards for the recall only and don't give them to your puppy at any other time. A small squeaky toy hidden in your pocket or a Kong Squeaker tennis ball is also a great tool you can use if your dog loves these toys or the sound of the squeak. Remember that the high value rewards is designated by your puppy, not you. It is what your puppy thinks is the best thing ever.
- ✓ You will **work in a quiet room with little or no distractions** and where your puppy is contained and can't leave the training area. The recall is taught and **proofed inside first**. When you go outside, there is a vast number of distractions that you now have to compete with, so only use "come" when practicing inside for now. When outside, use other things (sounds, foundation cues, orientation games) to get your puppy to go to you.

### Step 1: Running Recall

1. Prepare high value treats ahead of time. Bait your hand without your puppy seeing.
2. Stand in front of your puppy and place your baited hand to his nose. With your puppy's nose attached to the lure, begin to back up and away from your puppy. Encourage your puppy to follow with enthusiastic sounds.
3. Just before your puppy catches back up to your hand, say, "Come" and have your puppy touch your baited hand with her nose.
4. Mark and Reward, and Release and praise with excitement.

### Step Two: Standing Recall with "Gotcha"

(once your puppy is consistently coming with the Running Recall)

1. Bait your hand with a few soft yummy treats without your puppy seeing.
2. Call your puppy's name. When she turns to face you, say, "Come."
3. Extend your baited hand out and then bring it in to your body centered between your legs at your puppy's nose level.
4. Walk backwards a few steps and encourage your dog to follow with enthusiastic and happy sounds, if needed.

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5. Have your puppy touch your hand with her nose. Mark it and as you are feeding your puppy her treats, grab her collar, harness and pet her neck and chest ("gotcha"), then release and praise with excitement.
- 🐾 Many dogs create a run-by recall or resist being touched. Often it is because they associate the recall with being hooked back up on leash or being grabbed and the fun ends. When practicing the recall, get your puppy used to being touched and held and then released to resume play. If your puppy or dog already has a habit of not allowing you to touch her or grab her, you will want to play "gotcha" to get her used to it.

### Step Three: Adding Distance

1. Attach a light leash or light long lead to your puppy and allow her to drag it during the exercise. (If your puppy bites at or chews the lead you want to work independently with dragging the leash around and redirect her attention on to other things to desensitize your puppy to the lead.)
2. Bait your hand.
3. Work with your puppy about 5 feet away from you. Say your puppy's name, followed by "Come."
4. When your puppy turns to come to you, mark the turn and the action of coming towards you - "Yes!"
5. Hold your target hand out and pull it down and to the center of your legs. You can add additional encouragement to keep your puppy's attention on you and coming - for instance, making cute little noises and/or taking a few steps backwards, patting your legs, etc. Try to keep yourself standing up straight as much as possible.
6. When your puppy comes to you, make sure your target hand is now at nose level. As she touches your hand with her nose, mark it and praise your puppy and open your hand to give your puppy the reward. Remember to also touch her collar, harness, neck and chest while delivering her the treat.
7. Now, take a low value treat (like a small piece of biscuit or kibble) and toss it down on the floor a little ways away from you to get your puppy to turn away from you and move a few feet away from you.
8. Bait your target hand again.
9. Repeat the process again, marking the turn towards you and then holding your target hand at the center of your legs. Practice until your puppy readily comes to your target hand and is consistent with the distance of 5 feet at least 9 out of 10 times.
10. Then increase the distance by a few feet, and proof again. You can toss a distraction treat on the floor a little further away, and/or you can take steps backwards when you bait your target hand again. Continue practicing until your puppy is reliable inside from one end of the room or hallway to the other.
11. Next, take it to another room and practice there. Then practice out-of-sight exercises until your puppy is 90% reliable under many indoor situations before taking it outside to the backyard. Once your puppy is 90% consistent outside, play games with the recall, calling her from outside in and from inside out. Remember that when you teach the cue under a new situation

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12. (new location, adding distractions) to go back a step or two to practice at an easier stage to help with success, and then build from there.

13. Play this **Come IN to you and go OUT game** and have fun with your puppy!

**\*Troubleshooting** - Sometimes, when your puppy understands that you have her high value treats and you are tossing less exciting stuff, she will stop going for the low value treat and stay by you. If this happens, don't be frustrated - celebrate - she's choosing you. You are a source of better things! Yay!! To continue with the game in the future, you can work with the same level treats, but JACKPOT your puppy when she comes to you.

### Step Four: Out of Sight

Now it is time to start playing out of sight recall games. Begin the same as you do in step 3. Then after you toss a treat away from you and your puppy eats the treat (and just before she turns around, say, "Come" and then go around a corner. Mark and reward your puppy for finding you! Over time you can begin hiding in tougher places. This is the starting place for playing Hide-and-Seek.

Sometimes a puppy might need a little help finding you, so kissing sounds, clapping, patting your legs and the like can be helpful to keep her looking and locating you.

### Recall Games

It is important for Come to feel like a game and be fun. It needs to lead to good things and positive outcomes. So get yourself into the habit of "playing recall" often. Here are some games that you can play to build the fun into the cue...

#### Puppy Ping Pong

Person 1 stands in one spot and Person 2 stands in another spot about 10 feet away with the dog. Person 1 calls the dog. When the dog comes, Person 1 marks and rewards the recall. Then Person 2 calls the dog. (If the dog doesn't leave Person 1, he turns his back and ignores the dog.) When the dog comes to Person 2, he marks it and rewards the dog. Then Person 1 calls again. The dog bounces back and forth between the two people. As the game progresses in proficiency for the dog, the dog will run back and forth more quickly, and the people can then stand further away. The game can be played inside or outside, or both, and helps to build speed and distance to the recall while keeping it fun and exciting.

#### Round Robin Recall

This game is just like puppy ping pong but with multiple people and can involve the whole family. Everyone stands about 20 feet away from each other in a room of the house and takes turns calling the dog. Practice the recall by presenting the target hand, marking and securing the dog before the next person calls. If the dog goes to the wrong person, that person should stand there and be boring, while the person who called makes attention getting sounds to help guide the dog to the right person. This game can later extend to different rooms of the house with people out of sight and around the backyard, or both.

#### Running Race Recalls

One person holds the dog (can be by the collar or harness). The second person starts running away from the dog. The restrained dog may start barking and pulling to get to the running person...this is

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what you want! Once the running person is about 20 feet or so away she calls the dog and the person holding the dog lets go. The dog runs to catch up to the running person who then marks and rewards the dog. Then you can switch and have the other person run if you like. This game helps build drive for the recall through the natural instinct of chasing.

If only one person is playing, catch your puppy unaware and run away, make attention sounds, and as your pup turn and runs after you, say come and then reward when your pup catches up with you.

### **Real-Life Rewards**

Take advantage of real life situations that your puppy loves for practicing the recall. Real life rewards can be many things, such as resuming play or exploring, playing with a toy or person, continuing the walk, or eating dinner. You need to practice the recall under many different circumstances and then allow your pup to enjoy the wonderful benefits for coming to you.

If you just practice with your puppy on a stay, she won't learn to listen when she is busy paying attention to something else.

If you only call your puppy to hook up the leash or end play, she will learn that the recall means that fun is over and will resist coming to you.