

THE REALLY RELIABLE RECALL... part two

Inside your house and in areas with minimal distractions your dog is running to you eagerly when he hears his name. When he hears the recall signal he is flying to you. You've been careful to use your signal only when you know he would come to you. You are ready to continue.

1. From now on, only call your dog with your recall signal when you know your dog will come to you or when you can control the consequences. In other words, call when you can make sure that coming to you will be more rewarding than not coming to you.
2. To set up for success, make sure your dog has frequent opportunities to exercise off leash, either in a fenced or safe area. Whenever he returns to you, reward him with treats and praise and tell him to go play. You can call him to you with his name, you can hide from him and run away from him, but if he is running free, don't use your recall signal yet, because you can't control the consequences!
3. Attach a long line (it can be string, cord or rope depending on the size of your dog) to your dog's flat collar when you are going to have him exercise off leash. The line can be 15 to 20 feet or much longer depending on the age and speed of your dog. Put a few knots towards the end of the line and let your dog drag it while he plays. If you need to, you can step on this line to stop your dog. Be careful not to stop your dog by grabbing the line with your hands, as you could get a serious rope burn!
4. At first, call your dog using your signal when you are quite sure he's going to come to you. Make sure he gets lots of rewards when he gets to you.
5. Gradually begin to add mild distractions, making sure that you can control the consequences. In the beginning it is easier to control the consequences if you do this inside.
6. Increase the level of distractions and plan the consequences. Use your imagination. If he doesn't come to you, have a friend step on his line and you go far away and play with his favorite toy. Go play with another dog, feed his treats to another dog or do anything else you can think of to help him realize coming to you would have been a better choice.
7. If you have done a good job reinforcing your recall signal, it should be pretty hard to keep your dog from coming to you. If you find that it is easy to distract him from coming to you, you should talk to your instructor and return to reinforcing the recall signal.