



# to a rock solid recall

Get Your Dog to Reliably Come  
When Called!

**Workbook**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have made the decision which will enhance the quality of your dog's life in ways that can't be measured! For most of us, when we get a dog, we have a vision of what we will do together. That vision includes things like going on long, exploratory walks in the woods, going on picnics and fishing trips and having a dog who is our faithful companion – a dog who wants to be with us more than anything.

The reality is that in very short order, most of us discover that our dog would rather chase squirrels than hang out with us! There are many reasons for this, and those reasons will be discussed throughout this program. Don't despair! We can change this reality with just a little dedication. This program is designed to help you teach your dog to come when called – under all circumstances! It's important to understand that there is no such thing as 100% reliability – we can train for many, many circumstances, but we can't train for them all. Please, always keep this in mind – especially in areas of heightened potential danger, such as city streets, or during hunting season if you are an outdoors person.

### LOGISTICAL STUFF

In this course, dogs will be referred to as “he” or “him” and the owner or trainer will be referred to as “she.”

The technical word for the behavior of coming when called is “recall.” This term will be used throughout the program.

This program is divided into 4 sections:

- Section 1 – GETTING PREPARED
- Section 2 – MAKING IT FUN
- Section 3 – CREATING RELIABILITY
- Section 4 – ADDENDUM

If you make the commitment to spend the next 90 days working on your dog's recall, you **will** have a reliable recall! We will discuss time management in Lesson 3. None of the tasks are difficult, but the time management gets harder as the program progresses, so let's address that

issue early on and make a good, do-able plan to help you and your dog succeed!

The next couple of lessons will cover issues such as equipment, time management, etc. You will have some actual recall tasks, but these tasks will be laying the foundation for later, more advanced work.

You will have tasks with each lesson. Try to spend between 15-60 minutes a day on your tasks. It doesn't have to be all at once – you can split it into 2 or three sessions, or just do it throughout the day, if practical. You should work on the current task until your dog is very reliable; some tasks are more difficult than others, so you will need more time to complete them. You should not move on to the next lesson until you've mastered the current one. This workbook will help you by giving you specific goals – until you reach these goals, stick with the task(s) you're on and don't move to the next lesson. If you commit to serious training **almost every day** (you can have a few days off for unexpected events, but you should plan to train every day), you should have a dog that has a reliable recall within 90 days!



Goal: Create anticipation!

Today's task is to sit down with your dog and discuss all the fun things you'll do together once your dog learns to come when called!

# GETTING PREPARED

## Lesson 1 – Equipment

There are certain pieces of equipment that you will need to make the process easier. All of these items can be found at [http://www.raisingcanine.com/products\\_affiliate.htm](http://www.raisingcanine.com/products_affiliate.htm), SitStay. You don't need to spend a fortune on these items and if there are less expensive alternatives, they will be mentioned, along with the pros and cons. As with any undertaking, the right tools make the job easier!

### BAIT BAG

You will need a bag for carrying your treats. There are several types on the market, and you should decide which will work best for you. Professionals use bait bags that are designed for this purpose – they come in a variety of styles and colors, but they are all washable (either in a washing machine, or with a damp cloth) and are designed to be worn on your waist; they are fairly inconspicuous, so you can wear them in public and still be fashionable!



One style has a drawstring top, so you can close it. This serves two purposes – it keeps the treats from falling out of the bag and it keeps overly enthusiastic dogs from sticking their noses in and eating all your treats! This bag attaches with either a slip on clip that goes over your waistband, belt or pocket, or a closed clip that goes on your belt loop. Many of the drawstring bags have an outer or zip pocket, which is highly recommend.



Another style looks more like an envelope, and has a metal “snap closing” feature. You pull the metal pieces apart, and the bag stays open; you can shut the bag quickly by simply pressing on the top and the metal piece springs closed. This bag also comes in a couple of styles – either a slip on clip as described above, or a belt that goes around your waist.

Some people prefer to use a fanny pack, and they work quite well, also. You can get a very inexpensive fanny pack at WalMart or Target. One of the advantages of a fanny pack is that they usually have several pockets, so you can divide your treats according to value, carry a leash, tennis ball, your keys, etc. The disadvantage is that they are fairly bulky.

Another option is a nail apron. You can find nail aprons at most hardware stores for less than \$2.00! They have two large pockets and tie around your waist. The advantage of the nail apron is that they are very inexpensive, washable and have two pockets. The downside is that they are not very attractive, so you will be less likely to use them in public.

You can also choose to simply use your pockets. This is not recommended until you are fairly advanced, and if you do this, you need to be wearing loose trousers so you can quickly reach in and grab your treats. The downside is that if you are wearing nice slacks, you may not want to put smelly treats in your pockets.

All of the above options are viable, and you may come up with your own solution. Regardless of how you decide to carry your treats, please remember that they should be readily accessible. Be aware that putting the treats in a baggie does not work very well – and putting a plastic baggie inside your pocket is about the worst choice!

## **TREATS**

Now that you have something to carry your treats in, you need to get some treats! A big issue is deciding what type of treat to use with your dog. Some foods are more motivating than others! Below is a list of potential treats with the least valuable listed first – this may or may not be the correct hierarchy for your dog, but it's a good starting place.

1. Kibble (dry dog food)
2. Canned dog food
3. Biscuits (Milk Bones, etc.)
4. Other commercial treats
5. Hot dogs
6. Tuna
7. Garlic roasted chicken
8. Stinky meat spreads
9. Stinky Cheese
10. Meat scraps
11. Fatty meat scraps

You should have a variety of treats available to use. We'll talk about how to use treats in Lesson 4 – there is an art to it! We'll also talk about efficiently preparing treats in the time management section, Lesson 3.

Be sure to consult your veterinarian before making a drastic change to your dog's diet. If your dog is not allowed excessive protein or meat products, there are some great treats on the market made out of potatoes.

## LONG LINE

A long line is simply another term for a long leash! You can buy a 30' or 50' leash at many pet supply stores. If you can't find one in your area, check out [http://www.raisingcanine.com/products\\_affiliate.htm](http://www.raisingcanine.com/products_affiliate.htm). We use long lines when adding distance and/or distraction. It allows us to get some good distance without fear that the dog will run off.



An inexpensive, yet effective way to make a long line is to get a 100' clothes line and 4 clips. You can cut the clothes line into 2 or more pieces of varying length. You then attach a clip at each end and you can use this when working on distance. Be aware that if there are trees or other objects in the area, the dog will probably get caught up with a long line. Try to find a fairly clear field to work in, initially.

## EXCITING TOYS



Although food will be our main motivator, it's a good idea to get the dog hooked on other items, as well. If you go to a dog park to train, you will not want to take food with you – the other dogs will harass you and possibly start fights over the food. If your dog has a favorite toy – tennis balls and tug toys are excellent candidates – you can use them as a reward when your dog comes after being called. We'll talk more about this in Lesson 7.

## CLICKER (optional)



If you have already been exposed to clicker training, you may want to use your clicker during this program. However, if you have not used a clicker before, it isn't recommended that you start now – there is a lot to know about clickers before you get started using them, and this is not a clicker course! Good motivators will work just fine!

## WHISTLE (optional)



Some people use a whistle to signal their dog to return to them. This is an excellent tool for long-distance training, but is not necessary for most people. If you do use a whistle, the pea-less type is best – peas often stick. You'll also want a lanyard to attach to the whistle and wear around your neck.



Goal: Get outfitted for efficient training.

Go to [http://www.raisingcanine.com/products\\_affiliate.htm](http://www.raisingcanine.com/products_affiliate.htm) or to your local pet store and purchase the necessary equipment. Unless you live in a large area that has one of the larger chain stores, you'll probably want to order your equipment. It's unlikely a small pet store will have everything you need.



## Ten-a-Day

Goal: Begin foundation work

Each morning from now until the end of the program, each member of the family should put 10 treats in their pocket and call the dog throughout the day, dispensing a treat each time the dog comes. Don't make him sit, or do any other tasks – just reward him for coming when called. In future lessons, this will be referred to as the “10-A-Day” exercise.

## Lesson 2 – Vocabulary

You may or may not know these terms, so they are listed here in alphabetical order as a reference:

**Criteria:** Criteria is the level of difficulty of the behavior you are asking your dog to perform. Level of difficulty will depend on what your dog has already been trained to do.

**Cue:** a “cue” is the formal command that causes your dog to do something – it can also be called a “command” or a “stimulus”

**Distraction:** A distraction is anything that takes your dog’s attention away from you.

**Generalizing:** Generalizing is the ability to take a concept from one situation to another. Dogs are not as good at generalizing as humans are, so you will find that you must re-train a behavior under different circumstances – i.e., different locations, different people, etc.

**Kibble:** Kibble is dry dog food.

**Proof:** proofing is when you take a behavior that your dog knows and train it under different circumstances and in different places – for reasons that will be discussed in the section on Creating Reliability, this is a crucial part of the program

**Recall:** this is the term trainers use for coming when called

**Red herring:** mystery readers will probably know this term – it means a false clue or something that takes you down the wrong path

**Stimulus:** a “stimulus” is something that causes your dog to do something – it can also be called a “command” or a “cue” – a stimulus is not necessarily done on purpose; for instance when you open your refrigerator door, your dog may come running – that was not your intent, but that sound is a stimulus for that behavior.

**Stimulus Package:** The stimulus package is all the stimuli that are happening in the environment – the stimulus package should be broken down and dealt with one-by-one, if possible.



Continue working on the 10-A-Day program.

## Lesson 3 – Time Management

Time management is probably going to be your biggest hurdle! Remember – this is only a 90 day program and once you’ve completed it, you won’t ever have to do it again! Of course, you will have to call your dog and reinforce him for coming, but if you do that regularly and under different circumstances, the recall should maintain and you won’t have to do actual “training.”

### TREATS

Whenever you go to a restaurant that serves steaks or prime rib, ask your waiter if they could give you some scraps – and always get a doggy bag! Take the scraps home, cut them into appropriate sized pieces, put them in sandwich-sized baggies and freeze them in training-session-size portions. That way, you’ll always have a ready supply of highly motivating treats. You can also buy a cheap cut of roast beef (rump roast), cut it into pieces, sauté it with butter and garlic, and freeze that; another great motivating treat is an inexpensive frying chicken roasted with garlic, cut up and frozen. Buy cheap hot dogs in big packages, cut the entire package up at once, microwave them until they are dry and freeze those. Hot dogs will last almost forever in the freezer and for a very long time in the refrigerator; if they have been microwaved until dry, you don’t have to thaw them when you take them out of the freezer – they are ready to go.

### TREATS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

If you have treats available in various locations throughout your house, you can call your dog on impulse! For instance, you could get a bunch of small, inexpensive, decorative bowls, fill them with kibble or hot dogs, and have them in various rooms such as your bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, etc. Then, as you go into one of those rooms and see the treats, it will remind you to call your dog and reinforce him for coming. Not only does this help with training your dog, but it helps with your time management – you get a lot of extra training in with almost no effort! Be sure to place the treats out of your dog’s reach! Another good treat holder (especially outside) is a wall sconce – you can find these at gardening supply stores.



## FORMAL TRAINING SESSIONS

At the beginning of this program, it will be fairly easy to work the training sessions into your daily routine; however, as you progress, you will begin taking your dog to various locations to proof the recall. If you prepare for this now instead of waiting for the lesson, you won't find yourself not having time to do the work. Taking your dog on the road and working the recall is the most important part of this program; almost all dogs will come when called in the house – it's coming when out in the world that's a problem! Remember that this is a one-shot deal – if you commit to working the program for the 90 days, you'll achieve your goal, your dog will be trained and you can go back to your normal routine!

While working on your schedule, you will need to schedule in prior appointments (kid's sports, meetings, etc.) and work around those. Also, you should make another schedule for weekends – you will probably have more time on the weekends, but saving all your training for the weekends will not work – you need to get more sessions in or you'll begin falling behind.

Sit down with paper and pen and write down your normal daily schedule in half-hour increments. There is a form at the end of this workbook that you can use. Your schedule might look something like this:

6:00am	Wake up, shower, dress
6:30am	Breakfast, feed dog, read paper
7:00am	Prepare lunch
7:30am-5:30pm	Work
5:30pm	Arrive home, change clothes, feed dog
6:00pm	Prepare dinner
6:30pm	Dinner
7:00pm	Kids' homework
7:30pm	Kids' homework
8:00pm	TV, laundry
8:30pm	TV, laundry
9:00pm	TV, clean house
9:30pm	TV, clean house
10:00pm	Kids to Bed
10:30pm	Talk with Spouse
11:00pm	Bed

Analyze this schedule and decide where you can get an extra 15-60 minutes per day for training (you'll need more time as the program progresses).

In looking at this schedule, you are pretty booked up until 8:00pm. Here are some options for freeing up some extra time:

1. You can get up a half-hour earlier
2. You can make lunches and lay out your clothes the night before
3. You can read the paper in the evening or at lunch
4. You can prepare the evening meals on the weekend
5. You can eliminate some evening TV & do the chores on the weekend
6. You can enlist the help of your family with some of the chores

You can also re-arrange some of your schedule. For instance, if you'd like to come home from work, change clothes and take the dog out immediately, you can push dinner back an hour and eliminate one hour of TV. You might want to turn the training sessions into a family outing. Once you start doing field work, you can pack a picnic supper (or grab some to-go hamburgers) and go to the park for dinner and training.

We all lead busy lives; however, if we really sit down and look at our schedules, it's easier than we realize to make extra time. Sitting down and analyzing your schedule is the first step to creating more time! You should set aside some time during each week to review the coming week's schedule so you are not taken by surprise. If you have prior commitments, work around them.

Initially, most of your work will be done in or around your house, so you don't need to worry about going anywhere. Ideally, your plan will include the following:

“10-A-Day” exercise

10 minutes in the morning to work on recall exercises

10 minutes in the day or early evening to work on recall exercises

10 minutes in the evening to work on recall exercises

3 blocks of time each week to take the dog to the field or park

A time to sit down and work on the next week’s schedule

A time to prepare the next week’s treats, if necessary

This schedule will give you the most “bang for your buck!” Having several short training sessions is more productive than having one long session; in fact, if you can do it, six 5 minute sessions would be the best schedule! However, if you cannot do six 5 minute sessions, two 15 minute sessions will be better than one 30 minute session and one 30 minute session will be better than not training at all!



Goal: Create a realistic training schedule

Using the “WEEKLY SCHEDULE” form at the back of this workbook under “Addendum,” make a weekly schedule, creating enough time to train an average of 30-60 minutes per day for the next 90 days. You can make a schedule for everyone in the family if everyone is participating in the training. You might find that this is a good family exercise – you are able to plan your week’s activities in advance and can carve out some family time!

Prepare at least one contingency plan for the unexpected. For instance, if there’s a thunderstorm, you may not want to go to the park to train. However, if you have a back-up plan in place, you won’t have any excuse not to train! This is a good time to go back over the basics and reinforce your dog for relatively easy tasks – an easy day for both of you.

Prepare at least enough treats for one week; you can prepare more and freeze them if you wish. It will help you to have everything you need prepared ahead of time – we often let our resolve slip if we have to do more than the actual training task, so preparing your treats ahead of time is a good habit to get into.



Continue working with the 10 treats per day.

## Lesson 4 – Using Treats as a Motivator

Treats are the motivation for your dog to return to you – so we need to make sure they are motivating. Many people think their dog is not food motivated, but – assuming you have a normal, healthy dog – this is not true. It's more likely that the dog is simply more interested in other things – we need to make him interested in the treats. There are some key points to remember when using treats.



The first is that your dog probably is not very hungry. Most pet dogs are well-fed and many get to eat whenever they want (we call this free-feeding). If you leave your dog's food down for him, he will be less food-motivated than if he is given a specific amount of time in which to eat his meal – 15 minutes should be plenty of time for your dog to finish his meal, then you can pick it up. Your dog may miss a couple of meals, but when he's hungry, he'll eat the food when it's available! Owners often feel that this is cruel, but if you think about it, we don't prepare a meal, serve it, eat a couple of bites, get up and do something else, then come back when we feel like it and eat. We eat at mealtime! We have a period of time set aside for eating, and that's when we eat. Food is a very valuable resource, and the more control owners have over this resource, the more responsive our dogs will be.

Another tip is to train when your dog is hungry! In other words, if you know that you are going to take your dog out and train him at 10:00a.m., it's a good idea to hold off on giving him his breakfast until after the training session. If he's just eaten a big meal, he's not going to be as motivated by treats. If you need to skip the meal from the evening before, that's fine – it will not hurt your dog to miss one or two meals. Obviously, we don't want you to starve your dog, but a missed meal or two is fine, unless your veterinarian says otherwise.

If a dog is not used to being trained with treats, he may not respond as expected, at first. However, the more you work with him using treats, the more responsive he'll become.

It is very important to not let the dog dictate what treat he will or will not accept. Treats can quickly become a red herring if used improperly. When

training around the house, you can probably use kibble. If your dog does not respond to kibble, even when hungry, then move up the hierarchy to hot dogs. Kibble or hot dogs should work very well in the house and yard and should become your main treat. When you move to the field, **don't use kibble!** Kibble will not be valuable enough under those distracting circumstances. Always take hot dogs, but also take some of the meat scraps as an added incentive.

Another way to get your dog hooked on treats is by hand feeding. Take the dog's daily ration, but don't put it down on the floor for him to eat! Instead, put it in your bait bag and dole it out throughout the day for good behaviors. Ask him to sit, then give him a small handful of kibble when he does; ask him to come, then give him a small handful of kibble when he does; give

him a small handful when he is playing quietly by himself – just start rewarding him for general good behavior. Your dog will very quickly learn that good things come from you, and he'll also quickly learn what he has to do to earn those good things!



Whenever you make a big leap in criteria you may want to have some of the higher-value treats available. For instance the first time you go from the yard or familiar neighborhood to a strange field, you'll want to make sure you have really special treats AND that your dog knows you have them! You may want to give him one before you even start training. We try very hard to make very small criteria jumps, but sometimes we have to make a bigger leap than we would like. It's for these leaps that we save the really

special treats! You can also use extra special treats when the dog performs exceptionally well – let him know you recognize and appreciate the effort.

## HOW MANY & HOW BIG

As a rule of thumb, high-calorie treats should not comprise more than 20% of your dog's caloric intake. If your dog is overweight, you will want to use even less – you should consult with your veterinarian. A good option is to find a high-quality dog food that your dog really likes. You can often use these foods as a treat, and you can consider them part of his daily meal intake – some dogs like these high-quality foods as much as hot dogs!

Medium to large dogs should be working for a treat about the size of a pea. Smaller dogs (25 lbs and under) should be working for a treat about 1/3-1/2 that size – maybe about the size of a hulled sunflower seed. You want your dog to work for the smallest, least valuable treat possible. If you give him big treats, he'll fill up quickly and not be as motivated to work.



Goal: Get prepared for training sessions

Prepare treats for the next week – or longer. Have a combination of treats – some low value (like kibble), some higher value (hot dogs), and some very valuable (roast meat). Distribute the kibble and/or hot dogs around the house so they are conveniently located.



Continue the “10-A-Day” exercise. This exercise will give you a good foundation for the harder work! Additionally, if there are children in the family, this is a great way to get your dog to pay attention to them, as well as the adults!



# MAKING IT FUN!

## Lesson 5 – Attention

Attention is at the center of all obedience work. If you do not have your dog's attention, you are unlikely to get a response to your cues! You have already been working on attention with the "10-A-Day" exercise! Now you need to add some variety – for dogs, as well as humans, variety is the spice of life.

This lesson is very important – getting your dog to pay attention to you is the most important and fundamental part of any dog training. Attention in dog training is the equivalent of learning your ABCs before writing an essay, or learning scales before playing Ragtime on the piano! We want you to have enough time to be sure your dog is attentive before moving on. After this lesson, you won't need to hand feed, any longer; however, if, in the future, you notice your dog's attention beginning to wander, start hand feeding again.



Goal: Get your dog interested in you and raise the value of his kibble

Start hand-feeding your dog. Pour your dog's daily ration of food in a bowl and put it out of his reach but where it is easily available to you so you don't forget to use it! Begin asking your dog to do simple, easy tasks – tasks he already knows – and reward him with a small handful of kibble.

If you ask your dog to do something (we'll use sit as an example), and he doesn't, don't repeat the cue. This is something that humans do a lot – if we don't get an immediate response, we give the cue again, usually louder! The dog heard you the first time and our goal is to get him to respond at the first cue – not the third or fourth! Count silently to 30, then repeat the cue. If he doesn't sit on the second cue, let him smell the kibble, but don't give him any. Then repeat the cue – assuming your dog knows how to sit, he should do it this time. As soon as he sits, say "Good!" and give him the kibble. If he doesn't respond after this, put the kibble back in the bowl and try again in thirty minutes, or so – repeat this sequence until he does sit.



## TASK 2

Goal: Get your dog to respond under a bit more difficult circumstances.

It's now time to increase the difficulty a bit. Start taking the "10-A-Day" exercise out to the backyard, front yard and other familiar locations. If you go to the dog park, start practicing there. If there are a lot of dogs at the park, you may want to substitute a game or toy for the treat – remember to be very careful about bringing food into dog parks.

Count out 10 treats at a time (see "Compliance Log" in the Addendum). When you call your dog, if he comes readily and you don't have to repeat the cue, give him a treat. If he doesn't come readily, take that treat and put it in a pocket that doesn't have any treats. Remember that your goal is 100% reliability under training circumstances. If you dispense all 10 treats, then you know you have 100% reliability – if there are any treats in your pocket at the end of the exercise, you do not have 100% reliability. If you reach 100% reliability, you must retest at another time. If you have 100% reliability twice in a row, you can raise your criteria ***a little teeny bit***.



## Lesson 6 – Critical Distance

Keep your dog within “critical distance.” Critical distance is the point within which your dog obeys your commands; and beyond which he doesn’t! Depending on how long you’ve been training and under what types of circumstances, your dog will have a distance within which he will be pretty reliable. That may be 5 feet, 10 feet or 20 feet – it may also be only when he’s on his leash. You can test his critical distance in places like fenced dog parks. Let your dog get a few feet away and call him back – do this several times; if he returns reliably, you’re within his critical distance and you can test him a few feet further out.

If you let your dog get beyond the critical distance, he will probably not return when you call him. We’ll talk about increasing distance in Lesson 10. Another thing to remember is that your dog’s critical distance will be different for each member of the family and in different locations! You will always want to know and remember your dog’s critical distance – if he’s beyond that distance, don’t try to get him back unless you’re actively training for a further distance, or you’ll weaken your cue.



Goal: Learn what your dog’s critical distance is

Take your dog to a safe, unfamiliar location and test his critical distance with each member of the family. Ideally, each family member will test their critical distance at a different session. If you can’t make the time to go to the park at a different time for each family member, be sure to give the dog a significant break between tests. If you test him right after testing with someone else, he’ll be in the habit of coming and the test won’t give you a valid result.

A safe location would be a fenced dog park, fenced tennis courts, baseball or soccer fields. There may be other spots in your area, but most towns have at least one of the above. If you’re taking him to a public place like a soccer field, be sure no one is using the facility and be sure you pick up after your dog if he eliminates. It’s important to maintain good will so you can continue to use these facilities – take plastic bags with you!



**TASK 2**

Continue the “10-A-Day” exercise, and add in several outdoor recalls.



## **Lesson 7 – Games to Add Variety and Interest**

There are a lot of games you can play with your dog to keep him interested in coming to you when you call him. Here are some of the most common and easiest. Don't be afraid to come up with your own games to play – just remember to keep your dog and yourself safe.

### **HIDE-AND-SEEK**

Dogs love to play hide and seek! You can hide in another room, behind a door, around a corner – anywhere you can think of. Once you're hidden, call your dog and when he finds you, give him a treat or play a quick game of tug with him.

### **ROUND ROBIN**

Have several people stand in a circle and call the dog. Only have one person call at a time – you don't want to confuse him! You can have a leader who tells people when to call. Each time the dog responds to the recall, give him a treat. Keep this game going fast, and don't form patterns or your dog will quickly figure out who to go to next.

Once your dog learns the game, you can add a little difficulty to it! Once he comes and gets his treat, he must stay with that person until called by another. If he leaves the person who called him in anticipation of the next treat, wait until he gets back to the original person, then have the next person call him before he has a chance to leave. He should learn that he needs to stay with the original person until called.

### **GO TO . . .**

A variation on Round Robin is the "Go To" game. When you've called your dog and he's with you, you say "go to Dad!" and point at Dad. When he gets to Dad, he gets treated and praised. Dad can help at first by calling the dog, but as he learns the game, you fade out the extra help. This will teach your dog the names of the individual family members, and friends. You'll eventually be able to tell your dog to go to anyone whose name he knows!

## **ROUND ROBIN HIDE-AND-SEEK**

This is a combination of the two games – Round Robin and Hide-and-Seek. In this version, the family members hide and then call the dog. Just be sure to discuss what order in which each family member will call the dog. You can make it even more fun, by hiding in a different place after each recall – i.e., Johnny calls Fido, then when Mom calls Fido, Johnny finds a different hiding place; when Dad calls Fido, Mom finds a different hiding place, and so on.

## **CHASE**

Dogs love to play chase. Ideally, they want you to chase them, but it's not a good idea to get in the habit of playing that game – it can quickly get out of control and it may sabotage your recalls. However, you can have your dog chase you! Just start running in the opposite direction from your dog and he's bound to chase you. It's a good idea to have a toy or ball with you so you can reward your dog for catching you. A quick game of tug when he catches up to you, then start running again.

## **BETWEEN THE LEGS**

Sometimes dogs will come when called, but keep running right past the person who called them! To get your dog to come directly to you, instead of around you, have a treat, ball or toy in your hand and when the dog gets close, make sure he sees it, then toss it behind you between your legs. If you do it properly, he should go between your legs to get the ball or treat. You may have to start with him close up and work up to longer distances.



**Goal:** Learn to have fun with your dog, while teaching him that you are fun to be with

Start playing these games with your dog around the house and yard. The more fun you are, the more your dog will want to be with you. And, even

though it sometimes seems like a chore, you'll find that you have more energy and feel better about yourself and your dog after you play with him.



Work games into your weekly schedule.



Continue the "10-A-Day" exercise, and add in several outdoor recalls.



# CREATING RELIABILITY

## Lesson 8 – Catching Up!

After this lesson, we're getting into the meat of the training program. There is no magic, quick and easy way to get your dog to come when called – you have to do the work! This lesson is devoted to making sure your dog is trained to the level he should be before moving on. If you've been doing your tasks, you shouldn't have any problem getting this part under control; if you haven't done your tasks, now is the time! Get yourself caught up and ready to go. You shouldn't move forward until your dog is performing to expectation.

In dog training we have what we call the 80% rule for most behaviors – but not recalls! The 80% rule means when the dog is 80% reliable we can raise the criteria. For recalls, we want the dog at 100% reliability. Recalls are so important to your dog's safety that we don't mess around with anything less than perfection. Remember that throughout this program you are in training mode. Your dog understands this – he knows the difference between training mode and real life. If your dog is not 100% in training mode, there's no chance he'll be reliable in real life. This cannot be stressed enough – ***DURING TRAINING, YOUR DOG MUST BE 100% RELIABLE BEFORE MOVING TO THE NEXT STEP!***

The principles you use in this exercise will apply to all future work. You want your dog reliable at the current criteria before adding distance or distraction – remember this during future sessions.



Even though there are only three assignments, there is actually a significant amount of work in this lesson because we're making sure your dog is trained up to this level before we move on to the next level. If you have been doing your tasks, you will move through this lesson's tasks quickly. Take the time to work on the areas that aren't quite up to snuff – everyone will have areas that need improvement, so don't feel like you've blown it if everything isn't perfect! This section will give you specific ways to measure the behavior so you'll know what needs work. There is no order to these exercises – two or three exercises can be worked on the same day, but not during the same training session.



Figure out how long it should take your dog to come from different spots in your house or yard. Count out 100 treats and call your dog from different areas of the house and yard. Don't shy away from calling him when he's distracted (barking at a squirrel, etc.) – if he won't come from the yard when chasing a squirrel, he sure won't come at the park! This is the time to be sure he's reliable. In fact, you should be setting up difficult situations from which to call him! Being sure that he heard you, he should come immediately upon hearing the cue. If he doesn't, you need to work on this until he does. Work the behavior until you feel he's got it



Don't leave this exercise until the end – this is the exercise you are most likely to need to work on. Take your dog to the park or other safe area at a low-distraction time of day (early mornings or during the week day are your best bets). Start walking around the park, keeping your dog within his critical distance at all times. Call him frequently (at least every 15-30 seconds, and certainly every time he starts to go outside his critical distance) and either treat him, or play tug or another game with him. At this point, don't play fetch, because that will take him outside the critical distance. Do this for 30-45 minutes. Your goal is for your dog to remain within the critical distance at all times and to come every time you call him. Do this on a different day – or at least a different trip (you may want to make more than one trip in a day) – with each family member. Once he's responding 100% during the low-distraction time of day, take him at a medium-distraction time, then a high-distraction time. If you sail through this exercise with no problems (or once you've trained him to reliability), increase your critical distance by 5-10 feet and repeat from the start.

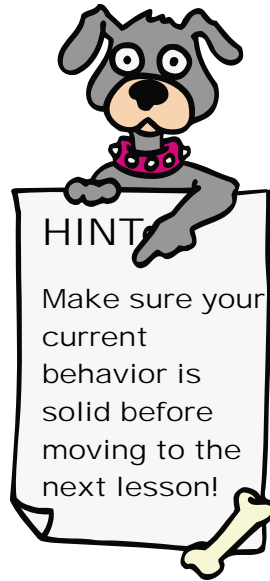


If your dog isn't actively seeking you out during the day, you should increase the number of games you are playing with him.

**If your dog is meeting all the above criteria**, you can relax. However, don't stop training altogether – keep your dog in the swing of things.



Continue the “10-A-Day” exercise.



## Lesson 9 – Adding Distractions

Ok – now that your dog is reliable within his critical distance, it's time to start adding more distraction. It's important to do distraction training before adding too much distance. A very important principle of training is to always control the environment; the further away your dog is, the less control you have over the environment. If you train your dog to respond to distractions before he gets too far from you, it will be easier to add in distance and maintain reliability.

The variety of distractions that are in the world are endless! It's impossible to train for all of them. However, we can predict a lot of distractions and train our dogs around those – hopefully, the training will hold up with other distractions. However, please do remember that we can't train for everything, so we need to be very careful about when we allow our dogs to run off leash.



Depending on where you live, you'll have different kinds of distractions. Cities will have distractions such as cars, bicycles, kids on skateboards, kids running, cats, squirrels and other dogs. Rural areas will have wildlife distractions such as deer, rabbits, feral cats, horses, etc. Suburban areas will have a mixture of urban and rural distractions. All environments will have enticing smells! The breed of your dog will make a difference in the ease of training. For instance, if you have a bird dog, it will be harder to call him off chasing a bird than it will be calling a guard dog off a bird. Scent hounds such as Beagles and Basset Hounds tend to follow their noses, and it can be very difficult to get them off a good scent! Sight hounds such as Greyhounds, Whippets, etc., can spot an animal at a very far distance, and – because they are designed to run far and fast – they can be gone in a matter of seconds! This is why it's so important to train methodically and make sure you've really done your groundwork.

When training for distractions, it's important to start by having control over your dog. Reduce the critical distance by at least half – maybe more. If you don't have a fenced area to work in, use your long line as a safety – if your dog takes off and you can't get him back, he is learning that he doesn't have to listen to you, so you need to have control over him. Never

call your dog if you know he isn't going to come. Here are rules for training both distraction and distance:

1. If the dog does not respond to the command twice in a row, cut the distance at which you are working in half.
2. If the dog responds to the command five times in a row, you can increase your distraction *slightly*.

If you are setting good criteria increases, you shouldn't have to decrease distance more than once every 5-10 criteria increases. If you find you are having to back up a lot, re-think your criteria jumps – it's probably too much for the dog.



Goal: Establish current level of distraction and learn what is distracting to your dog

You may already have a good feel for what distracts your dog, since you've been working with him for a while, now. However, it's a good idea to really pay attention to this and practice pre-empting these distractions.

Take your dog to a safe place that you've been before. Practice noticing potential distractions – dogs, people, birds, etc. Call your dog before he notices these same distractions – get him to come to you *before* he's distracted. This is a crucial skill for owners to have – if you get your dog's attention before he's distracted, that's 90% of the battle!



Goal: Increase reliability under distraction

Once you've mastered the above task, start at your home with set-up distractions such as throwing balls, one person playing with the dog while another calls, etc. Move it to the back yard, then to a familiar location away from the house such as the dog park.

Once you've mastered the contrived distractions, begin allowing your dog to see other, not-set-up distractions and perhaps even start in that direction, then call him to you and reward lavishly when he responds. If your dog is unsuccessful either two times in a row, or 25% or more of the time, your criteria is too high – make it easier for him.



Continue the “10-A-Day” exercise.

## Lesson 10 - Adding Distance

Once you feel your dog is 100% reliable in a highly distracting environment within his critical distance, you can start adding distance. During this phase you want to be even more cautious than usual! Don't get cocky – remember that every time your dog doesn't respond, he's being reinforced by that pesky environment!



Goal: Begin adding distance while gradually adding in distractions

Here's how to increase your criteria -- if your critical distance is:

- Less than 10 feet, only increase by 1-2 feet at a time
- Between 10-50 feet, increase by 5 foot increments
- Over 50 feet, you can increase between 5-10 foot increments

Remember not to increase the distance until the dog is 100% at the current distance. Also, when increasing distance, you want to mix it up; i.e., if you are working on a 20 foot distance, some of the recalls will be at 5 feet, some at 10 feet and even a few at 25-30 feet, but most of them will be at 20 feet. Dogs are able to discern patterns – we don't want him to figure out that he will only be rewarded for increased distance. Sometimes it should be very easy!

Each time you increase distance, before moving to the next distance, add in distractions starting with very mild distractions and working up to tougher distractions.



Continue the "10-A-Day" exercise.



## Lesson 11 - Fading the Treats

Up to this point, you have been rewarding the dog on a 100% reinforcement schedule – in other words, every time he responded properly, he has been reinforced. Now it's time to start getting him to respond without reinforcement. Don't take this to mean that you will entirely stop reinforcing your dog; you should reward him forever more – you just don't have to do it every time! Once you've completed this program, you should have ways to reinforce your dog for coming that don't involve food – maybe a toy or ball, maybe a quick game of chase. Again, this doesn't have to happen every time, but it does have to happen – at least a couple times a week the dog should be reinforced for coming when called.



Goal: Putting it all together! This is the last step, and once you've mastered it you should have a great recall!

Because we're increasing the criteria – coming without reinforcement – we want to lower all the other criteria. To begin, you want to continue reinforcing 75% of the time; once he's 100%, you can begin reinforcing 50% of the time; and, once he's 100% at that level, start reinforcing 25% of the time. There is no reason to reinforce less than 25% of the time – remember, it doesn't have to be food!

You don't want to develop any patterns. I.e., you don't want to call the dog, reinforce 3 times, and then not on the 4<sup>th</sup> time – the dog will soon learn this pattern and stop coming on the 4<sup>th</sup> recall!

The easiest way to do this is to reinforce all but the very worst recalls – the really slow ones. That will be approximately a 75% reinforcement schedule and you'll have the added advantage of increasing the speed of response! When you move to 50%, reinforce all average or better recalls. Finally, when you're at 25%, reinforce only the exceptional recalls. In the Addendum there is a chart for fading treats that you can use as a guide.



Continue the “10-A-Day” exercise.



## ADDENDUM

On the next pages you will find 3 charts that will help you in your training. Please use them to keep track of your progress and help you stay on track.

The Weekly Schedule is self-explanatory and has been previously discussed.

To use the Compliance Log, count out the number of treats you are going to use during the session, enter the date, the specific behavior you are working on and the number of treats you will be using. Then call your dog. If he comes, give him a treat. If he doesn't come, set the treat aside and try again. At the end of the session, divide the number of treats that you set aside by the total number of treats you started with. Subtract that number from 100. This will give you your compliance rate. I.e., if you start with 10 treats and give the dog 7, you will have 3 treats left.

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \div 10 &= .30 \\ 100 - 30 &= 70 \\ 70\% &\text{ compliance} \end{aligned}$$

The Fading Treats chart will help you progress in a logical way, and not go too fast. It will help you be sure that your dog is reliable without treats. You should use the Fading Treats chart in conjunction with the Compliance Log.

**Weekly Schedule**

	<b>MON</b>	<b>TUE</b>	<b>WED</b>	<b>THU</b>	<b>FRI</b>
6:00am					
6:30am					
7:00am					
7:30am					
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11:00pm					

**Weekend Schedule**

	<b>SAT</b>	<b>SUN</b>
6:00am		
6:30am		
7:00am		
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### Fading Treats Chart

75% Reinforcement	100% - note # of days or trials it took – only do one criteria increase per session
• 10 feet	
• 15 feet	
• 20 feet	
• 25 feet	
• 30 feet	
• 35 feet	
• 40 feet	
• 45 feet	
• 50 feet	
50% Reinforcement	
• 10 feet	
• 15 feet	
• 20 feet	
• 25 feet	
• 30 feet	
• 35 feet	
• 40 feet	
• 45 feet	
• 50 feet	
25% Reinforcement	
• 10 feet	
• 15 feet	
• 20 feet	
• 25 feet	
• 30 feet	
• 35 feet	
• 40 feet	
• 45 feet	
• 50 feet	

To go beyond 50 feet, use the same progression, but begin increasing by 10 feet instead of 5.

## CONCLUSION

If you've followed this program and haven't jumped ahead too quickly, you should have a great recall with your dog. If you're still having problems, go back and start over – use the **Compliance Log** and make sure you're not moving ahead too quickly. If you take the time to do it right, it really works!

You will always have to reinforce your dog's recalls, but you don't always have to have food with you. Over time, your pleased attitude will become a reinforcer for the dog. This doesn't happen naturally, you have to work it, but it does happen eventually. Periodic food rewards and games will also help maintain your recall.

