

# Five Steps to Sabotage a Good Recall with your Dog

Written by: Sam Kabbel, CPDT-KA, President, Pet Behavior Solutions

If you are looking for some sure-fire ways to be sure your dog or puppy doesn't come when he is called, follow these five sure-fire steps to ensure that!

1. **Use the come command when your dog is in trouble.** The first step is to be sure that you use the come command when he is doing something he shouldn't be doing – like getting into the trash, foraging in the cat's litter box, or re-landscaping your back yard. Simply say your dog's name and in an angry tone, call him to you. This will ensure a negative association with the come command creating an automatic "Uh-Oh – I need an escape plan" response from your dog.
2. **Lecture your dog when he comes when you call him.** The second step is to have a good "Mike Brady" lecture planned for when your dog finally arrives. Tell him how dangerous what he was doing could have been, how much he worried you, and that he is never to do that again. This is especially helpful when your dog somehow manages to get out a door or a gate and after a short jaunt, returns to you when you call him. A scolding lecture will surely do the trick here.
3. **Use the come command to call him when he is having fun.** The third step builds on the previous steps. Whenever your dog is doing something he wants to be doing, you should call him to you to end that fun just in case it is something that you may not want him to be doing. This will all build to a negative association when you command come and create a reluctance to return to you.
4. **Use the come command to call him to do something he doesn't like.** This is really the second most important step in this sabotaging process. Make a list of the top five things that your dog may not like to do. Some examples might include taking a bath, getting his nails trimmed, going for a ride to go to the vet's office, getting kenneled for the day, etc. Be sure to put the come command right before these events happen. As you can see, this will surely lead you to your goal of running the other way when you call him.
5. **Be sure to chase after him when he has something you don't want him to have.** This is the single most important step in the process! There is nothing more important than chasing your dog around to pry things out of his mouth. This is especially important when training puppies. Puppies are naturally *oral* in their exploration of the world. Often, they pick up rocks, leaves, twigs, wrappers, etc. while they are going for a walk or while they are in your back yard. You should approach your puppy in an authoritative manner and when you reach him, pry open his mouth and sweep along his tongue taking care to wipe everything out of his mouth. If he starts to run away when you approach, you should chase him around until you catch him. If he starts to out-manuever you being next to impossible to catch, you

should try to trick him by faking him out with a treat or by strolling past him and then grabbing him by his collar when he is not expecting it.

All of these steps will certainly accomplish the goal of ruining the come command for your dog. Unfortunately, most pet owners don't even realize that these steps would lead to that end. The good thing is that once you proof the demise of the come command, it can be quite difficult to undo.

*I hope you enjoyed this article for training the come command. While it was clearly intended to be funny, unfortunately, it is true more often than not. Despite this, we can train a reliable recall or come command but it will take a bit of work. It needs to be fun for your dog. Remember, 'come' cannot mean the end of the fun or the start of something bad. It needs to be the start of fun or the temporary pause before the fun resumes!*

## **How to Address Common Situations that Sabotage Good Recall with your Dog**

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Last week, I wrote about the things we all do that work against a good recall or come command with your dog. Hopefully, it was an illuminating look, from your dog's perspective, at how everyday things work against your training! You should also realize by now that doing everything perfectly is completely impossible! We need to find a good balance between controlling your dog while keeping him safe and teaching him that the come command is the best thing ever!

Today, we will look at each of the steps in the previous article and address ways to handle those situations. Please remember that there are many training activities that you can do to train a good recall. The purpose of this article is to address some common pitfalls that sabotage your training efforts. Please contact us for a systematic training protocol for a reliable recall.

1. Don't use the come command when your dog is in trouble. More often than not when we call our dog is it because he is doing something we want him to stop doing. If your dog hears the come command when you are angry and want him to stop doing something, he won't want to come. Instead, you should try using a remote punisher. A remote punisher is something he doesn't associate with you. Some examples would be a squirt bottle on stream, a startling noise, etc. If he is foraging in the litter box and is startled by a noise or startled with a stream of

water – he will be more likely to think that bad thing happens when he forages in the litter box – NOT that you get mad at him when he is in the litter box. If he associates his behavior with your displeasure, he is more likely to do it when you aren't looking! Teach him instead that scary things happen when he does it and you are there to save him from the scary thing.

2. Don't lecture your dog when he comes when you call him. When your dog shoots out the front door and through some miracle returns to you when you call – it is human nature to react emotionally. Especially when he returns safely, it is natural to think of everything bad that could have happened and visit that fear/relief on your dog. ALWAYS make a big, happy deal of when he returns to you NO MATTER WHAT. Even if he was slow about it or it took a bunch of repeated commands. The end result is he returned to you so that is something to be celebrated and then trained later!

3. Don't use the come command to call him when he is having fun. I see this happen often! When the dog is out in the back yard playing up a storm and it is time for you to go to work or time to go to bed OR when he is at the dog park playing with his buddies and you want to go home. If he hears the come command and it means the end of everything he is enjoying, he won't want to come. Instead, call him, make a big deal of his return to you and then let him go back to what he was doing. Do this several times before you actually need him to come. For example, call him once a minute for five minutes with a big hearty reward for coming and then a release to play again. The last time, give him that same reward and then you can take him away from what he was doing. This way, come is just a temporary pause in his fun and the reward is the return to the fun.

4. Don't use the come command to call him to do something he doesn't like. If you need to do something he doesn't like to do, simply go get him and either take him by the collar or put a leash on him to lead him where you need him to be. Don't give him any cues that the "bad" thing is about to happen. For example: if you need to put medication in his ears, don't get the medication and then try to get your dog. He will likely learn to run from you when he sees the medication. Instead, get him first and leash him up if necessary, then get the medication and administer it as needed. If it is necessary to crate him for the day and he is reluctant to get in his crate – you should crate him periodically at other times so the crate doesn't predict your departure and his isolation. You can also make entering the crate a fun game by using treats and praise.

5. Don't chase after him when he has something you don't want him to have. This is truly the most common reason that I see young dogs or puppies not wanting to come. Puppies or young dogs explore their world with their mouth so that means about 80% of what is in their mouth shouldn't be! There are several things you can do in this situation. First, puppy-proof as much as is possible so there isn't a constant stream of temptations around. Next, have lots of

things that he can have available for him. Don't stress out over things that won't hurt him. Leaves, twigs, grass – those are all common things for puppies to eat and they digest. Unless there are chemicals around or they are obsessively eating these things – don't worry about it. If he picks up a rock and then spits it back out, that is another thing you don't need to worry about. But if he is eating and swallowing rocks, then that is something to be concerned with since rocks don't digest! Instead of chasing him around when he picks something up – keep him on a leash and pull him away from it before he grabs it or if he does grab it, you can trade him out with another toy or a treat and divert him to something else. If you must swipe something from his mouth, he will already be on a leash under your control so there is no chance of him escaping and running away. If he is already playing the 'you can't catch me' game – try diverting to something else in order to not reinforce the 'game.' Go in the house and rattle the treat bag or leash so he hears something more exciting and leaves what he was doing to see what else he is missing. BUT you can't do these things as merely a trick – you should give him the treat, take him for a quick walk, etc. He needs to trade one activity for another, not just be tricked. Is there a possibility of him learning to grab a rock in order to make you get him a treat? It is possible though not common. If that happens – we can fix that sequence. What is more important is that he not run away from you when he has something.

These are just some examples of common training “errors” and ways to address them. If you are having specific problems with any of these examples, please contact us to help you through it. Sometimes, things are not as simple as a diversion or a remote punisher and you will need specific ways to address these things. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at 480-200-2011 or [info@petbehaviorsolutions.com](mailto:info@petbehaviorsolutions.com).