

## EMERGENCY RECALL (Come) CUE

An emergency recall can help you get your dog back if he gets loose and can also allow anyone with a whistle to help you in a search for your lost dog. It's very easy to teach and could save your dog's life (or save you from hours or days of searching if they get lost!) Even the best trained dogs can take off after something and get lost or frightened. This is for emergencies ONLY and not to call your dog every time you want to see their adorable face. It is for when you need the dog back immediately and should ALWAYS be paired with fantastic rewards for the dog. Don't abuse (and wear out) this recall cue!

The whistle training is very easy! I recommend starting in a fenced area, but you can also start with a helper and a long line (25' or 50' rope or leash) or inside the house. You'll be using a whistle of some kind. I went to a sporting goods store and got the loudest one I could find. As you'll read in the story at the end, it's a good thing I did! You could use any sound for this. You could even pick a certain word that you can yell really loud and will only use as the emergency recall word. Beth, who teaches this at camp, uses "YAHOO!" with her dogs.

At first, you blow the whistle (or say the word) and give the dog something he REALLY loves. Pull out the cooked chicken, the baby food, the cheese, whatever the dog really likes. If the dog is more excited about a good game of tug, you can use that instead of food. For my dog, it is string cheese :-). Do this a few times so the dog learns that the sound of the whistle means food (just like with the clicker, but the whistle doesn't "mark" a behavior, it causes it and becomes a cue.) During classes at camp, people used a variety of whistle styles and blew them in different patterns (like a long blast, three short bursts, short-long-short, etc.) The dogs were being worked one at a time, so it wasn't confusing for them. When others are whistling, treat your dog for looking at you.

Once the dog understands that the sound of the whistle means great treats (or their favorite reward,) that's when it's helpful to get a friend. The friend holds the dog (either in the confined area or on the long line) and you run away from the dog talking in an excited tone without calling the dog's name. "Can you get me!? I'm going to hide!" And the helper is also getting the dog excited about going to you. "Ready? Where's mom? Reeaaddy.. GO!" The dog gets to see you run away and you don't go too far, about 25' or so. When you get to the desired distance, you whistle THEN call the dog's name. The helper lets the dog go when you whistle and you run backward away from the dog continuing to whistle then call his name until the dog gets to you and you lavish praise and his favorite reward. It helps if you make the reward last by giving the dog several pieces of the reward one after the other. This creates a lasting impression, more so than one large piece or several pieces given all at once. Be sure to continue to tell the dog how wonderful and smart he is during this drawn out reward process.

After a few repetitions of this, you can start to go farther and/or hide a bit. Outside, you can hide behind a tree or structure, inside you can go to a different room. ALWAYS keep blowing the whistle and calling the dog until he gets to you then immediately reward and get excited. Don't make it too hard for the dog to find you and the dog should always be able to find you and get to you (don't make it impossible.) You want the dog to be successful and to be really excited to find you when he hears the whistle.

All the dogs did REALLY well with this at camp and seemed to enjoy the game! Once you are up to the point of hiding and having the dog find you, go back to the beginning

(run only a short distance, within sight) and now have the helper feed or play with the dog when you call and run backward. You are now adding in "distractions."

After the dog gets to you and gets some rewards from you, go back to the helper and let the dog get a few more treats from them. This shows the dog that just because they leave a distraction, doesn't mean that the distraction is gone forever. This helps later if you need to call your dog away from play with another dog or some other exciting situation. If possible, let your dog go back to playing after they respond to your recall.

If the dog doesn't respond to your whistle and call, keep whistling and calling, but have the helper stop what they are doing and ignore the dog. When the dog comes to you, reward heavily and get very happy that he made the right choice and go back to the helper for more treats or play. As you repeat this, the dog will learn that coming to you is (A) very rewarding and (B) doesn't stop his fun because he gets to go back and continue playing with or getting treats from the helper :-). It won't take long for the dog to immediately leave the distraction and bolt to you.

You can practice this any time you have super rewards for your dog. You always want them to associate the whistle with the very best things because you never know what kind of distraction you might have to compete with (another dog, a squirrel, a deer, a carcass, you never know). The combination of the really great rewards and the dog being allowed to return to what he was doing (as long as it's safe) is the key.

Be sure that if you have kids that they don't blow the whistle unless you are there to supervise and are actively doing the training. The dog should always get *great* rewards for responding to the whistle. If others are blowing a whistle, you can reward your dog. By doing this, when they hear a whistle, they will look for YOU. By not fading the rewards for this call, you maintain a strong behavior and if the dog is distracted by something really good (chasing a squirrel toward the street or something) and you have to get them back to you quick, they will respond. Always keep the game fun and let the dog know how pleased you are when they make the choice to come to you.

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It really works!!

I have to share a story about how well this training works. I had my Beagle at camp for the first time when we started working on this whistle training. Bear, my beagle, was a rescue we found running loose and he LOVES to use his nose. Camp is in the north woods of Michigan and is surrounded by miles of woods full of all types of critters, both harmless and dangerous. We had only done a few practice sessions before camp was over.

On the day after camp, I was packing up my things and since there were only a couple people left in camp, I had Bear loose in the lodge. I was on a tight schedule because I was supposed to be taking a fellow camper to the airport to catch her flight to Japan. Well, at one point I realized I hadn't seen him for several minutes. I hoped he had gone in his crate to nap, but that was not the case. I called his name and got no response. I realized he must have slipped out a door!! My heart sank and panic set in. I didn't even know where to begin to look for him.

I went outside, said a prayer and blew the whistle and called his name as loud as I could. I heard something crashing through the brush really deep in the woods, but didn't think it was him. I whistled again and called his name. The crashing was closer, but still deep in the woods. I didn't think a wild animal would run closer to my sound so I had a glimmer of hope that it might be him. I whistled again and moments later he came bolting out of the undergrowth and barreled to me at top speed, a great big grin on his face. He got 2 full sticks of string cheese in the longest "cookie party" I've ever had with a dog!