

Training Recall

Main points at a glance:

- Start training in the house by calling your hound from another room at mealtimes.
- All initial outdoor training should be on a lead or training line – do not let your hound be the one deciding when they will return.
- Always use their name to get their attention followed by the recall command.
- Always be consistent by using a key recall word, said in a clear, firm voice.
- Begin to allow your hound off lead in a secure area, only after they have shown that they are responding well to the recall word whilst still on a lead.
- Always give lots of praise and a tasty treat to positively train your hound.
- Once trained, if they start to ignore you, go back a stage, and pop a training line back on them.
- Be prepared to always have treats with you to positively reinforce good behaviour.

Training recall is one of the first things you will want to do with your new hound. Some hounds are very good right from the start but it still pays to teach them properly.

You must train your hound to recall before letting them go off lead.

Leaving it up to them to decide when they are going to return is not a good idea and bad habits quickly set in. Once trained, you can enjoy walks knowing that your hound will come back promptly when called.

Remember that in their racing life, trailhounds are lined up on a fellside with other hounds and released to run up to 10 miles over the fells on their own! Apart from people positioned at crossing points on roads, they race completely unaided. This requires a huge degree of independence on the part of a hound.

For training you will need:

Treats - a hip bag is useful to keep them in. Training treats should be extra tasty, such as small pieces of sausage or cheese.

A normal lead to start with, then progress to a longer training line. If your hound is boisterous and liable to run to the end of the line and jolt its neck, attach it to a harness instead of a collar.

A recall word. One word that hounds are called in to at the end of a race is **HERE**, so you may want to use that. Some hounds are called in to a whistle so you may decide to train with one.

Calling their name will get their attention initially but the recall word or whistle is what you are teaching them to return to so always use it, as consistency is very important. Use a firm and clear tone of voice.

First lesson:

To initially teach the command word, place your hound on a lead in front of you. With a small treat in your hand, entice your hound towards you as you run backwards using their name followed by your chosen recall word. When they reach you, put your hand on their collar as you give them the treat and lots of praise. This ensures that they do not grab the treat and then try to run off.

This level is very easy and you can constantly reinforce this whilst on a walk.

Progressing to the next level:

When you feel your hound understands what you are asking and is responding well, progress to a longer training line. You will still be in control but your hound will begin to get a greater sense of freedom on a longer line.

At this stage, you are instilling in them the habit of automatically returning first time so make it easier by calling them when they are least distracted by other things.

If they come straight back when called, give them lots of praise and a treat.

If they do not respond, gently tug and, if necessary, reel them in with the training line whilst using your recall command (still in the same tone of voice) and again lots of praise and a treat.

Begin to call them when they are distracted by other things. Make sure they get lots of praise and a treat so they can see it was worth their while coming back!

Do this again and again over a period of weeks and see how well they are responding before considering the next stage.

They have to understand that every single time you call them they will come back, whether by their choice or by you reeling them in. They will also learn that returning earns them a treat.

The next step:

When they are responding well every time, find a safe area to let them go and progress from there.

If they regress, put the lead back on again and continue training as before. Even if this takes weeks, do persevere as it will pay off in the long run.

Never punish or tell off your hound for not returning. Coming back must always be a good experience for them.

Gradually, you will only give the treat when they come straight back – you would always give lots of praise but treats only after first call. Eventually, you may progress to only occasionally giving treats but you should always be prepared to have pockets full of crumbs and dried up bits of sausage – but that is a small price to pay for having a well behaved hound!

A few extra things to consider:

Enlist the help of someone with a dog with good recall as your hound will enjoy racing back alongside another dog.

If you feed lots of treats on a walk, scale down the morning/evening meal accordingly as you do not want your hound to become obese.

When your hound is allowed off lead, if they come back to you uncalled, always give them a treat and praise as it means they are checking in with you and it should be encouraged.

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