

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
- Always use their name to get their attention followed by the recall cue word
- Always be consistent by using a same recall cue word, said in a clear 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 rewards with you to positively reinforce good recall
- Train your hound to walk off lead behind you. It does not need to stay at heel but must not pass you. See below for details.

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 understand your recall cue before letting them go off lead. Leaving it up to them to choose 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 happily come back promptly when called. Remember that in their racing life, trailhounds are lined up 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 to stop traffic, 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. A training line should be attached to a harness instead of a collar.

A recall cue word. COME or HERE, for example. 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 clear tone of voice.

First lesson

To initially teach the cue 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 move backwards using their name followed by your chosen recall cue word. When they reach you, give them lots of praise. 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. 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 reward. If they do not respond, gently reel them in with the training line whilst using your recall cue word (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 reward 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.

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 useful tip to teach your hound

Here is another very useful way to keep your hound safe whilst off lead. Train your hound to stay behind you on a walk. Initially you will train whilst on a lead but only until your dog understands what is required. Use a clear cue word, such as BACK. Your hound can lag behind to sniff and then catch you up but it must not pass you or deviate off paths to the left or right. It does not need to walk at heel. You may be surprised at how much exercise your hound gets, even when restricted like this. It is particularly useful in wooded areas where you can quickly lose sight of your hound if it runs ahead. You must be consistent with this training. However, if you reach a part of the walk where you would like your hound to run ahead, then use another clear cue, such as GO ON. Remember though – your hound should NEVER be off a lead in an open area until you have done extensive recall training, and you know your hound will respond.

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.

Trailhound Welfare does NOT support the use of shock e-collars at any time, or other aversive training methods. Sue Lloyd Lakeland Trailhound Welfare 01697 478383 / 07773 252350
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