



O B E D I E N C E

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Recalls and Fronts

by Diane Curry Niland, Obedience Editor

Recalls and fronts are exercises that our dogs will perform throughout their obedience careers. Therefore, we want to build a strong foundation of a superb recall and front from the very beginning of obedience training. When our dog executes a recall we want them to come to us briskly and willingly and then sit squarely in front of us. So how can we get that nice enthusiastic recall and that nice straight front consistently?

A Good Recall Is Part of Life

Calling our dogs is an everyday occurrence. Whether or not we compete with our dogs in obedience we need to make sure that we have a solid recall. One day it could save our dog's life. Start building a strong recall when your new puppy or dog comes home. Always make coming to you the best thing in the world. When you take your dog out and call them and they run towards you, praise and then reward with treats or a toy. You can add some variation to it by running away a few steps to get them to run faster and then reward and play. Give your pup a good belly rub when they get to you. The secret is to make you the most interesting thing there is. Be sure to always have a longline on your dog for safety if you are not in an enclosed area. If you call your dog and they don't respond, you can run to them and give them a playful, gentle tap and run away, inviting them to chase you. Remember that school is always in session. Whenever you take your dog out be prepared for a recall and have a reward on hand to give to them when they arrive.



Diane Lala Photography

Restrained Recalls

This is a great game to play with all dogs, but pups particularly enjoy it. It does require two people. One person sits holding the puppy gently by the collar or around the

chest and the other person sits a few feet away holding a toy or a yummy treat. The person holding the pup has the puppy looking at the other person as they call them enthusiastically. The pup runs to the other person, and when they get there they are rewarded and praised lavishly. Then the game is switched around and the person who received the pup becomes the sender. As the puppy becomes more confident the distance between the two people can be increased. Each time the puppy reaches the person calling they should be rewarded generously with food and play.

Cheeseballs

Cheeseballs are a wonderful tool to use to work recalls. Have three cheeseballs in your right hand. Hold your dog's collar with your left hand or hold your hand on the dog's chest. Throw one cheese ball and tell your dog to "get it." As the dog reaches the cheese ball, tell them to come and throw another cheeseball between your legs so your dog runs through your legs. Sprint away from your dog and tell your dog to come again and throw another cheeseball through your legs or you can run and then turn towards your dog and call him to a front and reward the front with a cheeseball. This game is a nice break for your dog during a training session. This exercise helps speed up your recalls and also helps improve fronts since the dog learns to drive straight towards you by running through your legs and then coming to front. Dogs love it and cheeseballs are the perfect treat for this exercise. They are easy to see and bounce easily. They are also relatively cheap if you buy them at one of your local dollar stores. On days when I have limited time to train I will play this game. It leaves my dog energized and I get some fun training time in.

The Stay

Yes, we definitely want to have an enthusiastic recall, but our dog has to have a rock solid stay until after the judge says "call your dog." Make sure that when you teach your recall for competition you hesitate after you walk out and turn towards your dog prior to calling him. You don't want your Aussie to think that once you walk out and turn then they can move right away. You can practice and proof this in several ways. You can walk out and hesitate for several seconds prior to calling. You can walk out, hesitate, and then return to your dog without calling. You can walk out, turn toward your dog and use other words aside from your call word. For example, say "bananas", "apples", or "oranges" instead of your call word. If you do this, just don't use a word that sounds similar to your recall command. For example if your recall word is "front" then you wouldn't use "frost" as a proofing word. It is also helpful to have someone pretend to be the judge. They should stand beside your dog or behind your dog and say commands so your dog gets used to this. Always hesitate in training after the pretend judge tells you to call, or have them repeat the command a few times. Proofing this will give you con-

fidence once show time comes around, and teaches your dog to listen to your commands and not the judges.

Fronts

I work fronts away from recalls in the beginning, and even as my dog's career progresses I work them separately quite often. It's important to realize that in novice you will only have one front, but as you move into open and utility the number of fronts you have in each class increases significantly. Therefore, you want to train good fronts. I want my dog to understand front and how to use his body to get into a proper front position. I start by having my dog at my left and pivot in front of him. I have treats in my mouth and just stand in front and bring both hands to my mouth, get a treat and lower it down and reward. I give the food so his head is raised up and his butt and paws are staying on the ground. This helps him get used to the end picture I am looking for. I repeat this session a few times, and then move on. I start the same and then take one small step back and say "front". I keep my dog on leash to help guide him towards me if I need to. Each time he fronts and sits straight I reward with a treat. I do about five of these and release and then five more for that session. You need to do what is best for your dog. Not every dog likes repetition, so you may need to do less, take a break, do a few more and then break again. Just do what is best for your dog, and only reward if your dog is offering the nice straight front that you want. Once your dog has a solid front coming straight into you, start working fronts from different



angles. This requires rear end awareness and a true understanding of where front is. Be prepared to help your dog when you first start to teach angles.

Guides

When you begin to take more steps away from your dog and work fronts at angles you may find that your dog consistently sits to one side. In this situation you may want to put together a guide to help your dog sit straight in front of you. Using this each time you work fronts will help your dog learn proper muscle memory when coming in and sitting in front. Reward each time your dog offers a straight sit. This way your dog understands this is what you want and that he is correct. When you feel confident that your dog understands what your criteria is, try doing a front without the guide. Continue to use your guides in training, but every so often remove them and see what you get.

My guide box is made of old scrap plastic decking pieces. You can make yours out of PVC, or just use pieces of wood. Just make sure the chute portion is narrow enough so that your dog doesn't have the opportunity to sit crooked. You want them to have a nice straight sit each time, and the guide should help them achieve this.

Good fronts are something that need to be worked on during your dog's entire obedience career. Training fronts doesn't have to be drudgery. You can make the exercise fun by rewarding your dog generously for a lovely front and then playing after. Be clear with what you want and try not to use your hands to adjust your dog. Instead, if you get a crooked front don't reward and just try another front. Mark and reward a front that meets your criteria. Sometimes if we use our hands on our dogs to adjust them they get nervous about coming in close to us. This is why it's best to just ignore the mistake and try again. Progress slowly, and don't be afraid to work on short, up close fronts. Most importantly know your dog and what works best for him. Have fun with it and enjoy the journey!

A Side Note

I was at an obedience trial recently and when the judge was presenting the awards at the end of the class she had such a refreshing view of a qualifying score and what is represented. She said getting a score of 170 was like getting a solid B in school because the handler and dog team received an 85%. A score of 180 would be 90%, a 190 a 95%, and so on. I think that is a wonderful perspective on scores. There have been times when I have qualified and received lower scores than I had hoped. Keeping this outlook in mind puts a positive spin on the entire scoring structure. So next time you get your qualifying score, put it in the context of a test score in school...it will bring a smile to your face!

Until next time, remember that connection, play, clarity and confidence = a magnificent obedience team!

Junior Showmanship Standings

as of August 31, 2016

1. Erin Turman 313
2. Sarah Stong 188
3. Riley Lautenschlager 167
4. Josie Scoonover-Nelson 145
5. Michaela Matkins 121
6. Megan Livingston 111
7. Tifani King 82
8. Bailey Crader 76
9. Hope Anzalone 61
10. Skyelar Williams 53
10. Kaia Hrachovec 53

Some of the Top Ten Aussie juniors are not USASA members. They cannot be rewarded by USASA for their efforts and successes if they are not members. Membership for juniors is free, and comes with many wonderful opportunities! If you know a junior that shows an Aussie, please check with them to see if they are a USASA member. Remember, juniors are the future of our sport, and helping them learn about all of the opportunities for involvement in our breed is incredibly important.



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