



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

Building a Bombshell Recall

Have you ever wondered why your dog has a fantastic recall in many situations, and then in others, he acts like he can't even hear you? Not even an ear will flicker in your direction, as you yell his name over and over and over again, getting louder and louder and louder. If you have any luck on your side at all, eventually your dog will come back. But not until he has thoroughly finished inspecting, smelling, and rolling on that God-forsaken, rotting corpse of a fish on the beach. Dogs have been accused of many things, Stupid, Stubborn, Strong-Willed, Dominant, and having a mind of their own, just to name a few.

I honestly do not believe that as I lay asleep at night, my dogs are secretly trying to deviously construct a plan of how they can overthrow my reign and rule. Thankfully, things are a bit simpler than that. What about straight probabilities? We all have taken some sort of a statistics class, and I think that when we call dogs in certain situations, it really just boils down to probability. Probability of a choice.

What is the choice you are giving YOUR dogs?

A lot of times the choices may include raised voice or yelling, scolding, gesturing, attaching leash and leaving rewarding experience, body language that the dog historically associates with negative consequences from handler...I could go on and on. I think you get my point. A fair question would be to ask yourself, "If I were my dog, would I come to me?"

Animals, humans included, make choices every day. WE have to make choices on whether or not we are going to get out of bed when our alarm clock goes off so we can go to work. What if we didn't really like that job? Whether you don't like it because it isn't fulfilling or what you want to do in life, or your boss is a nag and yells at you all the time, most of us do still choose to get out of bed and go into work. Why? Maybe the money is just that good, or if it isn't, you have weighed your options and some money is better than no money. If you weren't getting PAID, chances are you would not keep making that same choice. Animals in the wild do the same thing, and so do the dogs we live with.

How do we increase the probability that our dog will come to us when we call him in any situation?

First of all, you get what you reward. Dogs will usually work for the biggest payoff and most reinforcing reward.

"Come" is probably one of the most important behaviors you can teach your dog. It is also one of the hardest behaviors to get clients and their dogs to grasp. In this article, I will outline some crucial tips for building a bombshell recall and will also tell you what to exclude from your training program.

1. Get your dog's attention. Call his name, clap your hands, whistle, make kissy noises, or my favorite, turn and run.
2. Keep "come" on a leash or long line for the beginning phases of training. This varies from dog to dog.
3. Keep the distraction level low. Start in your house, yard, then the front yard, and so on.
4. Reward any step in the right direction of "come". This includes ear flicks in your direction, head turns in your direction, body orients in your direction, forward motion, in your direction, and so on.
5. Always jackpot your dog when he does come to you. The jackpot is determined by your dog. This could be chopped up hot dogs, chicken breast, or belly rubs.

Remember, to always keep this behavior in a rewarded state. You always have your voice and hands for praise and petting. No matter what happens, never punish your dog for coming to you. This will begin tipping this scale in the opposite direction you want it to go. Lastly, when training choice behaviors, the probability of 100% is never an option. NO matter how well trained your dog is, there will be something, somehow, someday, that your dog decides is way cooler than what you are offering.

Until next time, keep it pawisitive!