

# RECALLS

I have a new puppy - she is 4 months old - and when I call her from the deck she generally comes racing to me - what a great reinforcement for me! Here comes this happy little puppy, tail wagging, ready to leap into my arms. Of course she gets tons of praise and skritchies & scratchies and the occasional cookie as well as my smiling face!

But there are occasions when she doesn't come running. She is a Beagle and the smells in the backyard are pretty intriguing. Once in a while her nose gets stuck on one. Sometimes she is busy watching traffic on the sidewalk go by. Occasionally she is on the other side of the house and doesn't hear me. If she doesn't appear, I go looking for her - at this age I want to be sure she is staying in the yard :- ) and isn't trying to dig to China.

I try to be sure my body language and tone of voice are always relaxed, pleasant and welcoming. It's easy with the puppy - her grinning face and floppy ears make me smile. Her older brother occasionally just looks at me when I call & turns the other way. It's much more difficult to be upbeat in that case! I've found with him that sometimes I just need to go and get him. He's happier & I'm happier and it takes less time than me bellowing out the screen door. That tends to give me a few reps later where he comes quickly when I call - and he gets a cookie when he comes in. Yes, the dogs often have to come in because I am leaving for work, so coming in can be seen as a punishment by them; but life happens. And, if they want to hang out in the backyard, I have to go to work so I can pay for that yard for them! Every time I leave the house, the dogs do get a treat.

Years ago I was talking on the phone to a dog friend of mine & heard a horrible screeching noise in the background. "What was that?" I asked, worried about one of her dogs. No it wasn't her dog, but a neighbor's dog. The dog was having a great time running around the back yard and not coming in when his owner called. What I heard was the noise the dog made when the owner finally caught up to him. Any guesses as to what the dog will do the next time the owner calls him?

In my classes, we play 'catch & release' - call your dog, grab his collar, give him a treat sometimes, sometimes just let him go back to what he was doing. All too often we call our dogs and then the good times end (playing in the yard or at the dog park) and / or the bad times start (uh oh its time for mom to leave for work for hours & dog goes into the crate) Call your dog, reward & release. Just because!