



Rutland Dog Training

[www.rutlanddogtraining.co.uk](http://www.rutlanddogtraining.co.uk)

## **Recall by Adam Beral**

*I have a one year-old Whippet who walks well on the lead and is fine off the lead in the park or local meadows most of the time. However, sometimes when he is off the lead he will run to an area where he knows there are rabbits and he will not come back when we call him; we usually end up having to crawl about in the bushes to find him and drag him out. We have tried getting him to come back by tempting him with food treats but once he has his hunting head on nothing seems to get through to him, do you have any suggestions?*

Thank you for taking the time to write in. The problem you are having is one of many scenarios I hear about regularly. The breed may not always be a Whippet and the temptation may not always be a rabbit, but many dogs get overcome with the desire to run off and find something more interesting. The reason for the problem is a lack of obedience, in this case the lack of a good recall. The fact that he is only a year old is important. It takes time to get a really good recall, especially for young, immature and easily distracted individuals! Furthermore, Whippets have been bred for hundreds of years to hunt by sight and so it is unfair to expect to be able to change that in one short year of training!

The reason most people have difficulty training a reliable recall is because they leave their dog with a choice. What is more interesting, that bush full of rabbits or my owner, who I see every day, who is clearly agitated and waving a tit bit at me? It is easy to see how the rabbit will win out every time, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. But don't forget we do have one very useful tool at our disposal: a lead.

People get very bored of me saying it, but there is no way to teach a recall without using a lead to ensure that if your dog ignores you, it is possible to gently reel them in. Start recall training on a long, lightweight lead by calling your dog's name. This should be done in a quiet, distraction free environment. When your dog comes towards you, repeat their name in a cheery voice with the command "come". When they get to you, go really wild with praise and treats. Then allow your dog to go away again – do not restrict the recall to the end of the walk alone.

Only when your dog is hurtling towards you at the mention of the word "come" should you go to the next stage, which is to repeat the exercise with increased distractions. This should still be on the lead, so that if he chooses to ignore the command you have a means to persuade him! Whenever he returns to you, no matter how long it has taken, show him massive praise and attention. Never scold him for returning to you – no matter what he has just done!



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Only at this stage and only after many weeks of careful, consistent repetition would I suggest taking the lead off. Even then, I always recommend leaving a very light trailing lead on your dog that you can grab if he is about to run off.

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