



Teaching Emergency Stop

An emergency stop can save your dog's life.

This is quite advanced training, so please make sure your dog will respond well to basic cues first.

Pre-requisites: Stay/wait and good recall

Step 1: (Inside) Either ask dog to wait/stay or get someone to hold your dog's collar. Call your dog's name. As they come towards you, say "Stop" at the same time use a stop signal (hand held up above your head), then immediately throw a treat BEHIND your dog (aim for his tail) and praise well

Mix up "Stop" practice with doing a normal recall. Be careful to give clear cues: "(Dogs name) Stop" or "(Dog's name) Come". In general, do much more "come" practice than "stop" practice to make sure you don't spoil your recall.

Repeat until dog responds well to each cue and is enjoying the game

Step 2a: (Outside) either ask dog to stay/wait or have someone else hold your dog's collar. Repeat as above but this time add his favourite toy thrown BEHIND your dog instead of throwing a treat. Again mix this practice with normal recalls

Step 2b: (Outside) allow dog to wander /run around. When dog looks towards you, give "Stop" cue, then throw toy BEYOND dog. Mix with normal recall practice

Repeat until dog responds well to each cue and is enjoying the game

Step 3: (Two toys) Have one absolute favourite toy and one lower value toy. If your dog is fussy about toys, use two of the same type. Throw the lower value toy towards your helper and allow your dog to run after it. As your dog gets around 2/3 of the way to the toy, call "stop", call your dog back and have a huge play with his favourite toy. If your dog doesn't respond to the "stop" cue, the helper should stand on the lower value toy to prevent the dog getting it.

You can do the same exercise with your dog on a long line. Just be careful not to throw the toy beyond the reach of the line.

Repeat at various distances until dog responds well to the cue (minimum 95% success) and is enjoying the game.

Step 4: (Out and about) Once your dog has got the hang of "stop" take the training out and about. Start with venues that are less likely to be highly motivating to your dog – beaches are usually less interesting than woods, for example – and use a long line at first, until your dog has really got the hang of it (remember the 95% success target).

You will need to practice in lots of different venues. Just like with recall, teaching "stop" is work in progress and your aim is to make it a subconscious habit for your dog.

Then you can both enjoy walks without the fear of your dog running off or running into the road and getting injured or worse.