How to Train a Dog Recall With a Whistle in 21 Days

A 21-day plan for teaching a dog to come back to one fixed whistle tone, with the numbers behind every step.

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A whistle recall works because one fixed tone never changes with your mood, and the dog meets it in short daily reps rather than one long lesson. Dog Whistle Trainer is a free offline iPhone and Android app whose built-in 21-day Recall program pairs that tone with food in about ten minutes a day.

Disclosure: AppStoryo is operated by the studio that develops Dog Whistle Trainer. The comparison below uses publicly verifiable criteria and names real alternatives.

Dog Whistle Trainer ships as Dog Whistle Trainer & Clicker on the App Store and as Dog Whistle Trainer Pro on Google Play: free, 28 MB, iOS 13.0 or later, 44 languages, no ads, no accounts and no in-app purchases.

Why does a whistle beat your own voice for recall?

Because your voice carries your mood and a whistle does not. By the third call to a dog busy with something better, your tone has tightened, and the dog hears that change. A whistle note is identical at minute one and at minute twenty, whether you are calm or furious.

It also travels. ACME, a whistle maker since 1870, publishes distances for its gundog models: the 211.5 sounds at 5,700 Hz and can be heard up to 1.5 km in good conditions, while the closer-working 210.5 is described as effective to about 90 m. A phone speaker will not match 1.5 km, but the consistency argument holds at any distance, and consistency is the part the dog is actually learning with Dog Whistle Trainer.

Does the exact whistle frequency matter for recall?

Far less than owners expect, and the manufacturer's own pages are the proof. ACME's Canadian product page lists the 210.5 as a single frequency of 5,900 Hz at $16.00, while the British guide above describes the same 210.5 model as sounding at 6,200 Hz. Three hundred hertz apart, from one company, about one whistle. Dogs trained on either come back.

What the dog learns is that this exact sound, and no other, means food is waiting at your feet. So pick one pitch, write it down and never drift. Changing the tone mid-programme does not refine the cue, it starts a second one.

How does the 21-day recall program run, day by day?

The app's own store listing names three free plans, the 21-day Recall among them. It runs in four blocks and asks for roughly ten minutes a day, split into two five-minute sessions.

1. **Days 1 to 5, charging the whistle indoors.** One quiet room. Sound the tone once, then put food on the floor within a second. Ten repetitions, twice a day. You are not calling the dog yet, only teaching it that the sound predicts food.
2. **Days 6 to 10, one room away.** Wait until the dog is busy with something mildly interesting, sound the tone once, pay the moment it arrives. If it is ignored, do not repeat the tone; walk over, pay anyway and shorten the distance tomorrow.
3. **Days 11 to 15, garden or fenced yard on a long line.** Same single tone, same immediate payment, now with grass, smells and distance. Keep the line on: it makes the recall non-negotiable without anyone raising their voice.
4. **Days 16 to 21, outdoors with real distractions.** Two or three recalls per walk, never more, always paid, always released back to whatever the dog was enjoying. Being recalled must not mean the fun ends.

Dog Whistle Trainer tracks which day you are on for each dog, which is why it keeps a separate profile per dog in multi-dog homes.

What does the research say about how fast recall improves?

Faster than most owners expect, and without any pain. In 2020 a team at the University of Lincoln published a trial in Frontiers in Veterinary Science on 63 pet dogs with known off-lead problems, poor recall chief among them. The dogs were split into three groups of 21 and given up to 150 minutes of training across five days.

The group handled by independent trainers focused on positive reinforcement did best. They obeyed 82.5% of Come commands after a single signal, against 71.0% in the electronic-collar group, and came back faster: a mean latency of 1.13 seconds against 1.35. The authors were blunt about what that means.

> Given these results we suggest that there is no evidence to indicate that E-collar training is necessary, even for its most widely cited indication.

That most widely cited indication is recall, the exact behaviour this programme trains, using one tone and a pocket full of food.

Will the whistle play with your phone locked and on silent?

Yes, and that is documented platform behaviour rather than a marketing claim. Apple's reference for the playback audio session category states that app audio continues with the Silent switch set to silent or when the screen locks. An app adopting that category can sit in a coat pocket all walk and still sound on demand.

Two consequences follow. The tone goes to the phone's own speaker rather than to AirPods or a hearing aid, so it reaches the dog and not your ear. And because the screen can stay dark, a 21-day plan costs far less battery than a video-lesson app that needs the display lit throughout.

Which app should you actually use?

Choose Puppr if you want a filmed curriculum

- Over 100 video lessons taught by a professional trick trainer, plus live chat with its training team.
- 27,175 US App Store ratings at 4.80, the strongest score in this group.
- Needs iOS 17.0 or later, is English only, and downloads at 64.5 MB.

Choose Pupford if you want a full beginner course

- Built around a 30-day puppy course from a well-known trainer, with a desensitisation sound library for thunder and similar noise.
- 3,724 ratings at 4.77, 55.3 MB, last updated 6 August 2026.
- Also English only, and needs iOS 16.6 or later.

Choose Woofz if you want breadth in your own language

- Video lessons, behaviour programmes and a round-the-clock AI assistant, in 12 languages.
- 55,970 ratings at 4.57, the largest audience of the four.
- 174.6 MB and iOS 17.0 or later, the heaviest option here.

Choose Dog Whistle Trainer if you want the cue itself

- A whistle, a low-latency clicker and the 21-day plan in 28 MB, offline, with no account.
- Runs on iOS 13.0 or later, covering phones the other three have dropped, and ships in 44 languages.
- No video lessons and no human trainer to ask. If that is what you need, one of the three above is the better choice.

When is a whistle recall the wrong tool?

When the dog cannot hear it. The programme assumes intact high-frequency hearing, and an older dog that has lost it will not answer any tone. That is a veterinary conversation, not a settings problem, and ACME makes the same point by recommending the lower-pitched 210.5 for dogs that are hard of hearing.

It is also the wrong tool for an emergency you have not trained for. Twenty-one days buys a reliable recall in the conditions you practised in, not a dog that breaks off a deer chase beside a road. Keep the long line until the evidence says otherwise.

And it is never a correction. The tone predicts food. Sounding it to interrupt, startle or punish teaches the dog to ignore it, the one outcome the programme cannot survive.

Dog Whistle Trainer is free on the App Store and on Google Play. It is listed as Dog Whistle Trainer & Clicker on one and Dog Whistle Trainer Pro on the other, which is the same app under two store names.

Frequently asked questions about whistle recall training

How long before the whistle works outdoors?

Most owners see a reliable indoor response inside the first five days, because that block is pure pairing and nothing competes with it. Outdoors is slower: expect the last week to feel like the first week again, in a noisier place.

Can I run this with an adult rescue dog?

Yes, nothing in the plan depends on age. An adult with a history of ignoring its own name often does better than a puppy, because the whistle carries none of that history. It is a new sound with no bad associations attached.

What if my dog ignores the tone on day 12?

Do not repeat it. Walk over, take the dog gently by the collar, pay it anyway, then drop back to the previous block for two days. Repeating an ignored cue teaches the dog that the first one is optional, which is expensive.

Should I still call the dog's name?

Use one or the other, not both at once. The point of the whistle is that it sounds identical when you are worried. Mixing a tense voice into the cue hands your mood straight back to the dog and undoes what the tone is for.

Do I have to reward every single recall?

For the 21 days, yes, every time and within a second. After that keep paying often and unpredictably. The recall that decays fastest is the one that quietly stopped paying around week four, long before the owner noticed.

Can two people use the same whistle cue?

Yes, and it is a real advantage over a voice cue. Set both phones to the same pitch and the

dog gets one consistent signal from everyone, instead of a slightly different cue per person. Agree on who pays, too: the food should come from whoever sounded the tone, or the dog learns to run to the most generous person rather than to the sound.

Can I train more than one dog at a time?

Train them separately for the first two blocks, then together. Dog Whistle Trainer keeps a profile per dog with its own pitch and day count, which is what makes that separate stage practical rather than a memory test.

Is a phone as loud as a metal whistle?

No, and it is not meant to be. The 211.5 is built to carry 1.5 km across a field, while a phone speaker is a close-work tool with a deliberate volume cap. For long-distance field work, buy the metal whistle and pair it the same way.

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