

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG Hey everybody, welcome to Shaped By Dog. I am Susan Garrett, and I got a newsflash for you. Dogs don't understand past tense. They don't. They don't understand past tense. Yet there's a lot of dog training experts out there teaching people to believe that they do. And it is a bit of a pet peeve of mine. I'll get to that in a second. You'll see exactly what I mean.

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First, I'm going to share with you a couple of reviews. You guys have been awesome. Leaving me reviews, giving me a bunch of five-star ratings. I really appreciate that, but I want to, I want to share a couple of reviews. This first one from hound hosts, who wrote about the ABCs. Susan, this is absolutely the most important lesson I've ever gotten. This is how I trained horses and riders. Why didn't I see this with my dogs? Thank you for your insight.

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And that's the thing. A lot of what I'm teaching guys, it's common sense. But a lot of times we need to hear somebody reframe it in a different way, before we go, I know that. Why, why am I not doing that? And a lot of times, that's what I just like to project things that you may already know. This one is from a Carleetoh. Now 'toh' might not, might be like an acronym for something Carlee, but thank you for your review. Carlee wrote, "Susan Garrett is in my backpack, literally. Listening to her tips and tricks on the go and being able to come back to them whenever I want is the best."

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Thank you. You're the best Carlee for writing that great review. It brings up the idea, how do you guys listen to podcasts? I'm a big podcast fan. I love listening to podcasts. Generally, I do it when, sometimes when I'm walking the dogs, I like, I like to stay present for the dogs. So, if I'm doing it, walking the dogs, I got one ear bud in, and I'm, I'm kind of paying attention to the dogs. Mostly for me it's when I'm working out, and when I'm in the car. Let me know how you like to listen to podcasts.

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Okay, so back to the subject. Back when I went to my very first ever dog training school. I was told to get the dog to sit, put a cookie on their nose, lifted above their face and say, "sit, sit, sit". And when the butt hits the ground, say "good, sit" and then give them a cookie and do the same thing for down. But here's the thing guys, dogs don't understand the past tense. And it brings me to another point, question the experts. Especially in an industry like dog training, when there really isn't a lot of governing bodies that reign people in. Question my authority. Question some of my ideas. I love it because guess what, if we can question each other, we all become smarter. You never want to be the smartest person in any room. The key is to be kind when you're questioning, just like with our dogs, right? We question them. We always want to do it with kindness.

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So, if the way I see dog training is, a reflection of how I want to live my life in kindness, and to get results, get outcomes that I want that are outcomes that the dog wants. And that's what good dog training is all about. Okay.



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# One of My Biggest Pet Peeves in Dog Training

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So, let's get back to the past tense. If a cue, most cues are verbs. They mean, do something. I need you to sit, I need you to down, I need you to come, I need you to jump, I need you to catch, I need you to get it. Most cues are verbs. So, what we want from our dogs is an expectation of doing something.

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Think about picking up your car keys, or even don't even get to pick them up. Take your dog. Do you want to go for a swim? Do you want to go for a ride? Do you want to go for a walk? Whatever it is that your dog loves. I call that talking dirty to my dogs. I don't like to do it too often saying words that they really like, but the expectations that's something good about to happen.

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So, if you remember in episode 11, I talk about the power of permission. It's the transfer of value that happens... I spoke about that in episode 2, transfer value and the power of permission, episode 11. I talk about how words have this power to our dogs. Why is it? Because what happens is, it's followed up with reinforcement. And so, cues are so powerful. They mean, do it, boom. Sit down, stand, come, whatever it is. Now, here's how you may be screwing up your dog. And possibly like me, a former dog training instructor told me this. "Good sit." Now the dog is already sat. If I was to tell swagger sit and then tell him good sit. You know what he would do? He would get up and sit again.

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Sit is a cue that prompts behavior. If the dog's already doing it, don't use it as a descriptor. "Good sit." It's a bit of a pet peeve of mine. Because you know what you're doing, you're diluting your dog's understanding of the cue. Do you want a cue to mean "do something" or do you want a cue to mean, think about it and decide whether I'm using this cue as a descriptor or as a word that means, do something.

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We don't ever want to create that kind of confusion to our dogs. We want our dogs when they hear a cue, it's clear. I only say this word when I expect you to spring into action. Why? Oh, why do people insist on saying "good sit", "good down", "good come". It doesn't make sense. You're screwing up your dogs. If you insist on doing it, be grammatically correct. They've already done it, so say to them "good sat" or "good down" or "good came". Good came. Yeah, it doesn't make sense guys. Just praise them. "Good job." "Good dog." "Good buddy." "Good peanut butter." It doesn't matter. Use any word in any language. Start speaking in your own language. Create your own words.

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Just do not use a word that your dog knows and understands to mean, spring into action. Because all the power you've put by reinforcing that word to mean spring into action, you are now diluting it by saying good sit. They don't get it. They just understand praise and a word and is like, "do you want to get back up?" or "do you want, to uh..." Think about this, what if I told you when your dog sits, say "good down". No, no, Susan, I wouldn't do that. Why not? Well, because if I, if I did that, my dog would lie down. Why, why would your dog lie down? If you said good down? Because down's a word that means something to a, it means going to a down. Ah... And sit is a word that means something to your dog. And to keep it that edgy. To keep it that keyed up in your dog's mind, please, for the love of all that's Holy, stop using cues as words of praise.



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Phew. Okay. I've exhausted that one. But as long as we're talking about cues, let's go to words like, uh, now this one is going to cause some controversy. When you ask your dog to sit, how long do you expect them to be in that position? Think about that. So, if you say to your dog sit, can they put their butt down and get right back up again? Is it like a millisecond? Five seconds? Now, if I asked my dog to sit, I expect them to hold that position until I give them a release word. And for my dogs, the release word is "break".

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I'm going to tell you a little story. My late husband was a great and well-respected obedience judge. He judged competitions obedience, competition AKC and CKC competition, competitions all over. Actually, he judged in Japan, in Bermuda. He judged all of over... A very, very well-respected man. And when we moved to this property, I had a 10-month-old, oh, maybe he was older that, he must've been a year, over a year. Buzzy was a young dog, let's just put it that way. One day I was getting ready for work. We are out by the pond. We have a pond and John was tearing down an old chicken coop that was on the property. I'd let Buzz go for a swim and I said, John, can you just watch him? I'm just going to have him hang out here until he drives off, I'm going in to get ready for work.

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So, I told Buzzy to lie down and I went into the house and I got ready for work. I showered and put my makeup on, and I was just coming out the door. I was going to go get Buzzy. And John's at the door with his face like he's seen a ghost. And he said, do you know where your dog is? And my heart went my throat. I'm like, Oh, uh he's, he's in a down by the pond? I thought something had gone wrong. Do you know where your dog is? I'm like, "John, I asked you to look after him." Didn't want to say anything like that, right. So, I'm trying to keep my cool, uh, he's in a down by the pond. And John said, "he's in a down by the pond?" And I said, yeah. "No, Susan, he's, he's, he's still on the down!". And I went, Oh, I get it!

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This man has been judging obedience dogs for 30 years. He has seen dogs not be able to hold a five minute out of sight down stay, and my young adolescent dog just held a 45 minute out of sight down stay. So, all of these bells and I'm like, oh right, well, I didn't release him so he should have stayed there. And John was just blown away.

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So, when I give my dog a cue, there's two things to keep power with the cues. I have to respect the power of the cue. Which means I will never say to my dogs, sit, down, or stand, control positions... Like as I'm going out the door, let's say my dog was going to follow me out the door, which would never happen because my dogs are trained to the threshold. They would never go out the door. But let's say they did. I would never say sit and close the door and go to work for the day. Because that has how I keep edginess to my cues. If I ask you to sit or down, I expect you to hold the position until I give you a release word.

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Is that how you would expect it? If it isn't, then what's the timeline? I expect my dogs to sit for... I keep saying the word and he's getting excited because these are words he knows. I expect my dog to sit only for one minute. I expect my dog to sit only for... So, think about it. We need consistency.



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Dogs beg for clarity from us. We need to know what our expectations are because that's the only way we can teach them to our dogs. So, if you don't know how long you expect your dogs to sit, think about it. When I cue a control position, I expect my dogs to hold that position until I give them a release word. Now, if that's the case, why is it that a lot of people tell you when you say sit and you're going to move away, put your hand in front of the dog's face and say, "stay"? Isn't that redundant?

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Because sit means hold position until I give you release. So again, in this day and age, how many people listening to this have never taught their dog, when my hand comes near your face, touch it with your nose. I think, I bet you, at least half of you. Hands up, hands up if you've taught your dog when I put my hand near your face, you can nose-touch it.

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See, I see a lot of hands. There's a lot of you who have, who have taught that. So, when you ask your dog to sit and you give them a cue that they know to mean, move and touch, move and touch that hand, again conflicting. Sit means hold position, there is no need for the stay. And a lot of times you're told to lower your voice when you do it, "stay", like you're authoritative, "you stay".

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You know, and I think you know, if I've got a Border Collie or a small dog, that's fine. Maybe if you've got a bigger dog, you need to like, not just put your hand in front of the face. Maybe you need to like, pretend to kick them with your foot, "you stay!", they're a big dog. They might need that kind of intimidation. I don't know.

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I'm just saying, question what you've been taught. It needs to make sense to you. Because your expectations have to be clear in order for you to create clarity in your dog. You don't need to say stay. You don't need to say, wait, you just walk away, if you want your dog to hold position. A lot of times, I see so many competition obedience dogs that struggle or stressed with these behaviors. And a lot of times it's just because of the inconsistent way they've been taught.

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You can clean up, remove a lot of anxiety just by going to a place where it's a game, I've asked you to do something, play by my rules, and we're going to have fun with this game. And even if it's a two-year-old dog that I asked to hold the down, I honestly didn't expect, I really, when I put Buzzy in a down, I expected that John would have gone and done something with him. And maybe John thought he didn't want to mess with Susan's dog training so, I'm just going to come over and go, holy crap, do you realize what's going on over here?

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It's possible. It's possible for dogs to have that kind of clarity. If you start by that kind of clarity and recognize the power that cues can have in a dog. That they will be driven to do what you ask them to do. But also recognize how potentially the way you've trained or the way you are currently using cues your dog knows may actually be messing the dog up.





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I see it in agility a lot, when people ask the dog to sit and they turn around and they say, “wait, wait, wait”. Because they haven't actually trained the expectations they want from the dog in a sit, for the dog to actually hold position until they give them a release cue. And they're afraid the dog is going to break position. But what they don't know is by saying, wait, wait, wait, they're actually jacking the dog up more and more and more. And the dogs are just going to break.

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And at the end of the day the dog's going to break because, behavior of hold position wasn't trained with clarity to begin with. I'd like you to consider that. And as always, I'd love to hear your opinion. I'd love to hear any thoughts on what you'd like me to share my thoughts on in the future.

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Please leave me a review, wherever you're watching from. Please give me a ranking of this new podcast. It's been fun. I'm enjoying doing it. I look forward to doing many, many more episodes. So, this is so long, for now from Shaped By Dog.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 2: Reinforcement](#)

[Podcast Episode 11: The Power of Permission in Dog Training](#)

[Vlog: Toning Up On Cue Clarity \(Hearing The Sirens\)](#)



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### About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



### Meet Us Online

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