



## Episode: #53

# Stop Your Dog Pulling on Leash and Start Walking Together

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG If you've been listening to my podcast, you probably have heard me say, we got to get your dog out and exercise. But from what I'm hearing, sometimes that turns into a real battle because your dog is pulling on leash and it's difficult to walk him anywhere. Well, after today, all that could change because I want to share with you what you may have been doing that has led your dog to want to pull on leash, what you can do to fix it and how you can have an enjoyable walk with your dog.

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Hey there, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And before we get going, if you're watching this on YouTube, go ahead and smash that like button right now. You only need to hit it once. I mean, I say smash, but don't be too enthusiastic about it. If you're listening to the podcast in your car, well you know what, hands at 10 and 2, just listen.

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Back in the 1990s I made several trips to Hot Springs Arkansas to work with my mentors, Doctors Bob and Marian Bailey. Now, Bob and Marian were not dog trainers, but they were world renowned animal trainers. The majority of their income came from training animals, for things like, you know, television movies, being consultants on all of the Marine mammal training programs.

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Also training commercial animals to do things in fall fairs, like play chickens to play tic-tac-toe and pigs to run races, things like that. However, a good portion of their income came from the armed forces where they trained animals for espionage, true story, some fascinating stories. I could probably give a hundred podcasts about what I have learned in my interactions with Bob and Marian Bailey. Amazing, amazing animal trainers.

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So, when I would go down to work with them, I would work with in small groups of students from all over the world. We'd pay thousands of dollars for a weekend workshop. And when we go there, we weren't working with exciting things like dolphins or chimpanzees. We weren't even working with dogs. We were working with chickens. Bob and Marian were teaching us to train chickens for a couple of reasons.

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Number one, they learn super fast. Brilliant creatures actually, they learn super fast. And because they learn super fast, they expose your mistakes as a trainer. And that's where I realized that the most important thing about training any kind of animal is the mechanics of us. Human error.

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We've got to minimize that human error. I also realized in working with these chickens, that where you placed your rewards was critical. Now you may say, "Oh Susan, what's all of this got to do with getting my dog to walk on leash?" Well, let me share. There is something that we call a reward zone.



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And when we were training chickens, let's say the chicken was standing on a table and we had a cup clicking and rewarding them. The clicker was on the handle of the cup and we would give them a reward when we clicked and reward. However, let's say that table is divided into three sections. The section closest to me, the section in the middle where the chicken ideally would be working, and the section beyond that.

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If you rewarded the chicken in the zone kind of in front of you, on your way to the zone they were working in. And even if you try to get it in the zone you are working in, chickens are brilliant at picking this up so they would start turning their head to meet you part way. And before you knew it, you had a chicken that was kind of running up your shirt, trying to get the rewards. You had to place the rewards in the zone, beyond the chicken.

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So, they always looked over there for the rewards rather than, you know, acting out a scene from a Hitchcock movie. Okay. I know it's a reference that goes way back to black and white movies, but you get my drift. And so, it made me think about where we deliver reinforcement to our dogs. And this could be the first critical reason why your dog pulls on leash.

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Let's face it. Dogs pull on leash because it gets rewarded. Because we keep walking. If every single time the leash got tight, you stopped and didn't move until the dog came back beside you. They never would pull on leash. However, your walks would be really slow plus that's learning through punishment, which we don't want to do here. So, let's change that. Let's think about right now, how you deliver rewards naturally to your dog.

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If you're like most people you put down their dinner in front of you. "Well, that's their dinner. That's not a reward, Susan". It's reinforcement. And so, the dog learns, it's important to be in front of you. When you're going to give your dog a cookie, a treat in the middle of the day. You might call your dog over and the reward comes right down in front of your lady bits in the front. All right. Now, unless you're a dude, of course.

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And so, the dog learns being in front of you is an important place to be. You might be watching TV on the couch and scratch behind the dog's ears. And where is that dog? Right in front of you. You might play tug. Where are you playing tug? Right in front of you. You might give a dog a ball, and it happens right in front of you. So, the dog has learned to gravitate to being able to see you eye to eye. Important things happen. When we can see eye to eye, that's when all the good things in life happens.

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So isn't any wonder that when your dog is walking, they naturally just want to be out in front. Maybe looking back at you. Maybe on a good smell. Now the truth is there's a lot of good reasons why dogs pull, because there's good things out in front. Maybe we're walking slower than them. Maybe we're engaging their opposition reflex because when we pull against them, they're going to lean into that.



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Right. So, there's a lot of reasons why it happens, but let's change all that. Let's start being intentional about your reward zone. Now in my online class, [Recallers](#) we teach a game where we intentionally create a reward zone on your seam of your pants. So, your dog gets all of their reinforcement on the seam, right?

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Be seen on the seam. That's where the good things happen. But as I said, the mechanics of a dog owner, a dog trainer is so important. And so, I'm going to teach you how to get your mechanics really good so that your dog wants to be seen on your seam. Here's how it begins. First of all, most people like to walk their dog only on the left side.

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You need to get comfortable with your dog walking on your left or on your right. Next, you have to be patient with this. It's taken a long time for your dog to learn how to walk out in front. It's going to take a little while to change all that. And so, while we're working on this process, I'd like you to think about how you could change the rehearsals that you've got. How can we get the dog not pulling? Now, the easy way is not to walk them, but we don't want to do that.

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You could change the history, meaning if you've been walking your dog on a flat collar, you could put them on a harness or on a head halter. Now the harness is not going to do anything to stop them from pulling. Maybe a no pull harness might slow them down a little bit. Head halter definitely will. But remember, [refer back to my episode on how to condition a head halter](#) because we don't just want to slap it on the dog's head. Right.

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So, we have to change those rehearsals, that's number one. Number two, we're going to start training a better behavior right now. It starts in a stop. Because we need to help the dog understand that it's important to be on your seam.

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And so, get your dog in a sit, put them on a leash and get them on a sit and in a sit, move in beside them. Now, if your dog is like most dogs, when you try to stand shoulder to shoulder with them, they're going to get up and look at you. Because they're going to be like, "Ah, illegal procedure. You are not to be right beside me. I'm supposed to be looking back at you." And so, they aren't going to want to hold that position when you try to stand beside them.

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You may need to do this with a wall there. So ask the dog to sit beside the wall. And you come up beside them because what they want to do is flip their butt so that their butt is out in front. The goal is for your hips and your dog's hips to be parallel. They're in a sit and you're standing and you're parallel. So that's the first thing we've got to condition the dog to do.

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Now your mechanics. You're going to hold your leash, the loop of your leash in your right hand. And you're going to hold cookies in your right hand. And so, here's what's going to happen.



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Dog's in a sit beside you go to the right hand, take one cookie. Remember one, it's one less than two, it's only one. And then you're going to bring it across, touch the seam of your pants and then go and put it in your dog's mouth. Now, if your dog jumps up to get the cookie or moves in front, that's telling me that there It'sYerChoice.

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It'sYerChoice is not that good. I'll leave a [link in the show notes to teach you how to play It'sYerChoice](#), but the cookie should be delivered to the dog. They don't get meeting you part way. Remember the chickens when they want to meet you to get the reward, that's when bad things can happen.

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Okay. All we're going to do is practice this in a sit. Dog on the left, cookies in the right. Take one cookie, touch your seam, feed the dog. All right. It's just as easy as that. And then release the dog, play a little game, try it on the right side. Remember we've got to be able to walk our dogs on the right and the left. Maybe there's another dog walking towards us. We need to be able to get them on the other side. So, dog on the right, dog on the left.

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Eventually we want to move away from the wall and all you're going to do all day long, you're going to give your dog a cookie. Call them into the side, ask them to sit. You can pat your leg, give them the treat on the side and then release them. Once they get used to this, we need to move.

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And so, what you're going to do is you're going to ask your dog to sit. You're going to take one step forward and release them. And see if they will come into the reinforcement zone, get the cookie ready and put it in their mouth as soon as they come close. We want them to think about stopping when they get there. And now if they come out in front, no big deal, it just means they need a little bit more time. Then you're going to go back and you're going to start with them and you're going to give them a release and take one step and stop and feed them. Remember touching your seam.

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Eventually you can take one step, and around the room. Now we're going to move on to the third part of this game, where we need to turn into your dog. So, you're going to leave your dog in a sit. You're going to take a step out in front and towards the dog. And so, the dog is going to come into reinforcement zone, but on a turn.

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Eventually, you're going to make a circle all the way back on that path. We want to turn into the dog because if the dog and you are turning, they can't be pulling forward. And so, you're going to be walking around your living room with your dog on a leash, moving in a circle. Now if the dog is pulling out in front, you've got to do it one step at a time.

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One step, sit, cookie. One step, sit, cookie. One step, sit, cookie. Remember, you got to be seen on the seam. So, the cookie has got to come from your right hand, and you've got to touch.



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We want to touch the seam just to bring focus from your dog to, "Oh, that seam is my Pez dispenser." It's not coming from your right hand, it's coming from the Pez dispenser. So always touch the seam. Now you can walk in circles around your living room. You need to join those circles. So, you're going to walk in a circle, take one step in a straight line, another step in a straight line, and then start another circle. You're just going to be doing this around your living room. And then maybe around your basement if you have a basement.

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All the rooms of your house on leash. We're rehearsing what success looks like. And now you're going to take that game and you're going to go in your backyard. There's going to be more distractions there. This is going to be harder. It's going to be difficult to keep your dog on that circle.

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Go back into your house and you're going to introduce your first distraction. Maybe get someone to bounce a ball, or squeak a squeaky so your dog is going to want to pull. We want them to know that's not how we walk anymore. So, you're going to stop and wait until they come back into reinforcement zone. Praise them. Don't give them a cookie because we don't want a chain, you have to be good to be bad. [Check out that episode here on Shaped by Dog.](#)

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And then go back into a circle. So, when they see a distraction you do a circle. By the time you get ready to walk down your street, your neighbors are going to think you're a little loopy because you're going to be walking in loops. Take a few steps forward, walk in loops. Eventually those few steps forward can grow longer and longer and longer. And you only have to do a little loop occasionally. And that's when you have a dog who happily walks on a loose leash. Remember, patience is important, but your human mechanics is huge. Give it a go and come back to YouTube.

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If you're listening to this in your car, be sure to come into YouTube where you're going to see what that looks like. Leave me a comment. Let me know if you've tried it and let me know how it's working for you. Remember, be patient. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

[Blog Post: How do I Stop My Dog from Pulling on the Leash?](#)

[Podcast Episode 40: Using a Head Halter on a Dog, Why My Approach is so Different](#)

[Game: Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice \(IYC\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 42: Behavior Chains: Are You Teaching Your Dog to be Bad to be Good?](#)



# Stop Your Dog Pulling on Leash and Start Walking Together

### 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.



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