

3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:10

SG Can you remember the very first thing you ever trained a dog to do and how you went about doing it? Now that question depends on how long you've been training dogs I bet. For me, the very first thing I ever trained a dog to do was my Poodle, Tina. It's our family Poodle when I was a super young kid and I trained her to dance on her hind legs, using a lure, a food lure.

00:00:40

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Today, it's all about tricks and why I think it's so incredibly important that all dogs learn how to do a handful of tricks. And I'm going to share with you my three favorites that I like to teach - probably some of the three first things that I teach my dogs or puppies when I get them. Three, definitely three of the earliest tricks I teach them. I'm going to share with you why I think it's so critically important that all dogs have tricks and I'm going to share like this epiphany moment I had when I was teaching tricks.

00:01:16

I'd like you to think for a moment how you train your dog and what you're feeling, let's say you're teaching like a sit or a down or heel beside you, walk beside you. Think about how you go about doing it, what you're feeling, how focused you are or serious you are. Compare that to when you're teaching your dog a trick. What I have observed is that people tend to be more joyful and stress-free when they're shaping a trick. And I've always questioned why. Like maybe the outcome isn't as important, or it could be the early foundation of how you train those other things.

00:01:59

And, you know, as Harvey Mackay says that the quality of our life is dictated by the quality of our relationships. And the quality of our relationships with our dogs is dictated by how we train and the interactions that we have in that moment of training. And that's one of the big reasons why I think training tricks is so important because people tend to be more joyful. They tend to be more playful because they don't have an absolute outcome.

00:02:27

Even people who might be training in our program, which we're just teaching our dogs tricks. Basically, they're training games in [Recallers](#) or [Home School the Dog](#) to get specific outcomes. But when you're teaching something that isn't related to getting your dog to come when called or walk on a loose leash, I find people are a little bit more relaxed. But the biggest reasons why I think everyone should train a trick is because it really is a model of training.

00:02:55

And this came to me when I was driving home- I was at a dog show with my late husband. He was an obedience judge. He was judging that weekend and I was just along for the ride. And I was thinking about watching some of these dogs going through the ring, so stressed, so not having fun. And I remember that moment that I realized my Border Collie then was Stoni. She just wasn't having as much fun in obedience as she did when she did tricks.



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

00:03:23

And I said to John, you know, let's say there's like 10 or 12 or 15 behaviors we have to do in the obedience ring. I know that if I walked into that obedience ring and you told me to tell my dog to like limp or wave or crawl or do any one of the, you know, she probably had a hundred tricks. That she would do it fast. She would do it on one cue. She would do it brilliantly.

00:03:50

But why didn't I have it in the obedience ring? Like I had it still pretty fast and I had it very correct and accurate, but I didn't have that same joyfulness from her. And from that moment on, that was the epiphany that I said, "Well, aren't all behaviors, can't they all be just considered tricks?" Just some are a chain of tricks. Like a retrieve would be a chain of tricks. And when I adopted that mindset, I didn't know how I was going to do it, but at that moment I was training my dog with lures and then corrections if they didn't do it right. Now, that was back in the early nineties.

00:04:30

And that's when I made the transition to just shaping behaviors and evolving everything I did. So, there was no luring and no corrections. And I'm not saying that any luring is bad because there's very different forms of luring. And that could be an entirely different podcast. But the vast majority of how I teach my dogs now is with shaping behaviors and shaping with [targets](#).

00:04:54

All right. So, the target, yes, might be a lure, but it's not a piece of food. So, it's so important, that's one of the big reasons I think everyone should train tricks is because it's a model of training. It becomes a model of training. It's a way to teach our dogs that there is criteria in life. You need to do it this way and not that way.

00:05:16

That's the first thing, because the relationship we have with that dog, it's important that they learn they need to follow our rules, our guidelines and we want them to want to follow those rules or guidelines because we're not going to physically or verbally correct them. So, we have to train in a way that inspires them to want to follow there's criteria.

00:05:39

This is correct. This is incorrect. And we have to inspire them to want that. We want the dog to learn and tricks are a beautiful way to teach them that their behavior controls the amount of reinforcement we deliver to them. Like that's magical when the dog figures that one out. And it's so important, this is one of the most important things I love about training tricks is that it teaches the dogs never give up. That even when you fail, come back and try again. And it's easy to do it within the context of a trick, because a lot of tricks can be broken down into super small pieces. Right.

00:06:18

I personally, the tricks I choose to train my dogs almost always have an element of either strength, flexibility, balance, or proprioception, meaning do they understand how to use their paws independent of each other? And for me, all of those tricks lead to having a dog that is healthy, it leads towards their [longevity](#) and to their ability to do the sports that we play together safely and prevent injury. So those are the criteria really the reasoning why I love teaching tricks in all of my dogs. And I will get to those three tricks now.



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

00:06:56

When I'm talking about tricks, people might say, "Oh, I know Susan, the tricks you like are [ItsYerChoice](#) and [Crate Games](#)." And you could consider those tricks, but I'm thinking more of things that you might show off to your family, but they are all very functional. So, I'm going to— the three tricks that I'm going to talk about today, and I'm going to walk through easy ways you can teach them all. *Number one* is a **hand target**. Now I did a [video here](#) on my YouTube channel, and if you're not watching, if you're listening in the car, you can come back and check out our YouTube channel.

00:07:29

I did a video on how to teach your dog, how to nose target different things and it's a great video. And I would go back and refer to that video. But the hand target is something that's so functional that it's a way to engage your dog, get their attention. That if there's another dog that might be distracting them when they're outside, you can evaluate how aroused they are by if they will hand target.

00:07:53

And if they do hand target, do they go forceful or do they even add a little nip because they're over aroused. I love teaching a hand target. Also, because it's a foundation of a lot of other behaviors. So super simple way. If you've never taught a hand target, just, what— all that you need is some very high value rewards.

00:08:11

Now, go back to [episode 59](#), where I talked about how to rank or ranking your reinforcement and what I consider a high value reward. So, you're going to need high value rewards. And for this behavior, you don't need a clicker and you really don't need any other pieces of equipment other than your leash. I would keep your dog on leash just so that they don't get too distracted.

00:08:31

Ideally, you're doing this in a quiet environment. Have your rewards, your treats somewhere that you can reach them, but you know, not on the ground if that's going to be distraction to your dog. You're going to be standing up. You can be sitting in a chair if you want to do this in a chair as well. Take a cookie, put it in your hand and then put your hand behind your back and bring it out quickly. Open it. And your dog's going to rush over and see it. There's going to be a cookie in there.

00:08:58

Let them eat the cookie. You can tell them, get it. And then do it again with your other hand, put it behind your back, bring it out really fast. Boom. Open it. You want to open it in a way that your hands cupped so the cookie doesn't fall on the floor. Do that two or three times.

00:09:11

And what we want is that your dog's ears are up. There's that joyful look that they're going, "Wait a minute. This is a fun game. This is super easy." Once you've done that and you get that response from the dog so, they're like, "Okay, I want to play this game. Whatever it is." then you're going to take the cookie in your opposite hand, put a hand with no cookie behind your back in a fist, and you're going to bring it out as if there's a cookie in it, and you're going to open it so that your palm is flat and parallel to near your dog. You don't want to push this at your dog. You want your dog to come to it. So, hold it. You don't help your dog. Only dog comes part way, don't go the rest of the way.



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

00:09:48

Most dogs are gonna come flying and stick their nose near your hand. And then you can say yes and drop a cookie. So, your hand was flat. You're going to— it's parallel to your dog's nose. You're just going to drop your hands so you can drop a cookie in it. Rotate your hand so that it can catch that cookie and now you're going to tell your dog to get it.

00:10:06

Then you're going to go back to a cookie in your hand behind your back, pull it out. Your dog's going to run towards it. Open your hand, say get it. Do that two more times and then do it without a cookie. So right now, we're doing two hands behind your back with a cookie one without. Do that for a few rounds and then you're going to go to without a cookie and your dog by this point should be coming in and putting their nose really close to your hand.

00:10:28

You can use a clicker if you want, but you don't have to. But you should mark it. We want to mark the dog for touching their nose to your hand. And once you've played this, like, don't go crazy with this. You're only going to do this maybe for a minute or two the first time you do it. And then put the dog away, bring it out and play the game again and again.

00:10:47

Until, when you put your hand out, your dog immediately wants to touch their nose to your hand. And now you can drop the phase of putting the cookie in your hand first, because what we've done is, we've transferred the value from the cookie into your hand. They go, "I don't know why this hand is important, but it's like a light switch. If I can touch it something good happens. The lights are going on. I'm getting cookies."

00:11:10

Okay. So, hand touch. It's super easy, but it's so very important. I can use it to get my dog out of the way if they're kind of crowding me in front. And I personally never put a word to it. A lot of people will say, "come touch, come touch." I don't put a word to it because what happens is people who put a cue on this specific behavior tend to use the verbal cue when your dog is not paying attention to you. And by not having a cue by just having the dog on leash and backing away and putting your hand down, they're going to go, "Oh crap. I was missing the chance to get cookies. I should have been paying attention to you."

00:11:46

So, it's actually encouraging them to pay more attention to you rather than to looking way, because they never know when that hand's going to come down. It's a great game to play when you're out for a walk with your dog, help focus their attention back on you.

00:11:58

Not that I think dogs should be staring at you when you're taking them for a walk. But they should be paying attention so that if you do a surprise game of hand touches, they're going to be ready to get that reinforcement. The *second trick* I love to teach my dogs is what we used to call in the horse world as a **turn on the forehand**.



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

00:12:17

And by that is the dog's front feet make a little circle on a perch, or it could be a flipped upside-down dog bowl, as long as the bowl's big enough and not too slippery. We want the dogs back end to be taking big steps and their front end to take little steps all around this perch. Think of a chain of figure skaters. Right.

00:12:38

The person in the, at one end of the, we used to play crack the whip. Okay. If you're from Australia or other tropical countries, you're not going to get this reference, but everybody is in skates on a rink and the one in the middle stands still and just does a small little rotation on the spot. And the one on the outside, they're just flying around on the end of this chain of skaters so much fun. Okay. But I digress. So that's what we want. We want to teach our dog to rotate their back end. It's a great exercise for every dog. It's a way for you to see how freely your dog can move one way and the other. And I'm going to give you a little spoiler alert.

00:13:15

All dogs, when you first do this, have a preference to go one way versus the other. All you can do to start this is you're going to first— it's two parts. You just need to get the dog to put their front feet up on that— now what I use, you can use a piece of two by eight that you staple yoga mat to it. You could use, if you have an old phone book that you can glue a, glue it together so it doesn't open up and put a piece of yoga mat on that. Like I said, if you have a nice big round dog bowl, you can use that, but it's got to be at least two or three inches high maybe not more than that. And to get that dog to have a target for their front feet while we're getting their back feet engaged.

00:13:54

So, step one is we're just going to encourage your dog to put their feet up on that target. You can do that with your newly trained hand target. Put your hand near that perch, the flipped out whatever you're using. The dog comes near to hand target their feet are on that. You're going to reward them for that.

00:14:11

Throw the cookie behind them when they get their feet on it. You're going to say "search" or what I like to do is give them one cookie for coming up on the perch. Then I say, "search", throw another cookie behind them. That gets them off. So, they have to come back on. Eventually your dog's going to stay on there and then you can, it's basically like how well do you know to stay on there? Can I back away and you stay on there.

00:14:35

You don't tell them "stay", you just reward them for staying and get them a release when you need them to get off. So, they learn the word 'search' means I should get off and then you standing still means they should get on. Eventually you could call that a name. So, you throw the cookie out. And I like to say, "paws up". The dog on their way back, you can say "paws up". They put their paws up on there and that'll let you know that's a target.

00:15:00

Now we need to get their back end to move. You can do that two ways. Now, number one, you can take a step towards their back end, keep one foot in front and step towards one backside and see if they'll move that way and come back in front with— you're just moving one leg.



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

00:15:18

The one leg stays in front of the dog and the other takes a step towards their back end. You're not stepping on their toes. It's just— remember I did a podcast called the [invisible pressure](#) when we move towards our dog, there's that pressure that they will move away from. So that's what that's hoping to achieve.

00:15:35

The other thing you can do is you can go to a target stick, which remember I talked about the video where we taught target sticks and you just put the target stick, the dog knows to touch their nose to a target stick. You put it on their shoulder. So, they actually have to move their back end. You're going to click only when their back end moves. That's, if they come off the perch to do it, go back and just reward them for staying on the perch. We need them to get, just get circling with their back end only. If there's enough interest maybe I will do a video just on teaching that trick. I call it **perch work**.

00:16:08

Right. So, with horses we used to call it 'turn on the forehand' and in dog then I started calling it 'perch work' about 30 years ago. The *third trick* I love to teach my dogs is to **wave**. It's a simple game, but it allows me to see the flexibility my dogs have in their shoulders is again, another big, a great exercise or warm up before you take your dogs for a walk. You want them to wave with both paws.

00:16:32

So easy. This builds upon what we've already done. Take a flyswatter. Put it on the perch, the dogs might sniff it first, but they might step on it when they step on it. You can either click or say yes, toss the cookie away, say search. Eventually you can move the perch away so they're just stepping on that flyswatter. Brilliant. Now, what I want you to do is put them up on a raised surface.

00:16:58

I like to use a Klimb table or a Cato Board. You can use like a chair in your kitchen. And what you're going to do now— I wouldn't go too high because if it's too high, they're going to get worried. We're going to take that flyswatter that they were just stepping on. Now you're going to pick it up, put it back on the floor, let them step on it when it's kind of half on the floor. And then pick it up so it's halfway between before you put them on the chair. Halfway between their shoulders in the ground, they're going to step on it there.

00:17:25

Now, you know that they'll lift up their paw, one paw, the others just step on it. Now, put them up on that raised surface. We put them in a sit because that's what's going to get their paw up above their head. Because if they're standing up, it's really difficult for their paw to go up above their head.

00:17:41

And all you do is – over time - you raise the height of that flyswatter until the dog's reaching for it. And what you're going to do is at first, you're going to let them touch the flyswatter. We're going to do many repetitions of them touching the flyswatter. Then you're just going to move the flyswatter out of the way. And they're going to go to touch it, but they're hitting air. So, they might try and hit air again. And you're clicking that and that's the motion of waving. Mind blow.



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

00:18:06

All three of those behaviors are related to each other. The hand touch helps you to be able to teach the perch work. The perch work helps you to be able to teach the wave. Three easy tricks. And like I said, listen, if you would like me to do a video like I did on the target stick, if you would like me to do a video just on how to teach that perch work, the two ways that I talked about, a video on how to do that, what you need to do is if you're listening to this podcast, come here to [YouTube](#) and come to this episode right here, and you're going to do four things.

00:18:44

Number one, you're going to like this video. So, you're telling me you're interested in this topic. Number two, you're going to subscribe to this page, including hitting the notification bell. So, I can let you know when I've got the video ready and you can come and watch it. And number four, leave me a comment on this video. Then I promise if there's enough interest, then I will for sure shoot you a tutorial video, a quick and easy on how to get that perch work. It might not be as easy for you to understand just from me talking about it here. Happy to do the tutorial for you.

00:19:20

As always thank you for listening. We'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Recallers](#)

[Home School the Dog](#)

[Video: Target Training for Dogs Part One - All About Targets](#)

[Video: Target Training for Dogs Part Two - Step by Step Training Plan](#)

[Podcast Episode 62: 12 Keys to Helping My Dogs Live a Long and Happy Life](#)

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

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Podcast Episode 59: Why Your Treats Aren't Working for Your Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 22: The Invisible Bubble of Pressure and Your Dog](#)



3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know

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

- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
- Pinterest <https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/susangarrett>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs>

