

The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:10

SG There are five words commonly used when training a dog and I'd bet while you're sitting, listening to this, you can think of what those five words are. Spoiler alert. I'm going to give them to you right now. *Sit, down, stay, come, and OK.* Five most commonly used words when training a dog. One of these words I would never ever use when I'm training my dog. I'm going to tell you which one and why I'm also going to share with you the five categories I believe dogs put all words we use into.

00:00:48

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. If you are watching this podcast on YouTube, go ahead and hit the like button now and by doing so you're showing trust in me that you know I'm going to deliver some inspiring dog training information. Hitting that like button is so easy, like I think a 15-week-old puppy can do it. And if you aren't watching this on YouTube, you might want to after at some point when it's safe, like not if you're driving your car because I just showed the cutest little video clip.

00:01:19

And in that video clip, [there is a prop, and I will put the prop link in the show notes](#) and I am going to give away a box of these. It's a prop that I use to train my puppy recently. And I want to give a box away to anybody who puts a comment on this video will be in a draw at the end of this week. Well, in seven days time, we will have a draw for somebody. I'm going to send you a box and not only am I going to send you a box of these props, I'm going to give you access to a little video clip showing you how I trained the behavior you just saw.

00:01:57

Okay. If you're listening to this podcast, jump over to YouTube because you will want to see that behavior. Five categories I believe that dogs put all the words they use into. Now, I'm going to preface this by saying, this is my hallucination because none of us know what our dogs are thinking.

00:02:19

Those five categories are number one, words that I respond to. And words I respond to, no matter what, regardless. Now think of how big that category would be for you. How many words does your dog know that they will respond to without fail? No matter where you are, they will respond to it. Like maybe cookie. I don't know. Number two, I think my dogs have hundreds of words. Now some are situational. So, if we are near agility equipment and I say the word jump, like they're going to jump. They love to do it, but they're not going to jump in the house when there's no jump obvious. Okay. I digress.

00:02:58

That's first category. Category is words our dogs will always respond to. *Sit* and *down* are two of the five cues that I use routinely pretty much daily that I know my dogs will always respond to. The next group of words for our dog's categorization, words we will ignore. Now all of our dogs have words that they'll ignore because when we're having a conversation with somebody, our dogs, "No, that's not important, it's not me."



The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use

00:03:27

The challenge is there are words that get put in this category, inadvertently. More on that in a second. We don't want our dogs to ignore any important words. So, we don't want words to go from respond to always into just ignore them. Sometimes the word "come" is poison, and the dogs learn, "I don't really have to respond to that one."

00:03:53

So, they get put into conversation. The next is words that could be confusing for the dog or they're unsure of. And again, words that should be in category number one end up here. And it is a lot of the times because of the way we use them. So, think of, first thing comes to mind is George Foreman, the former heavyweight boxing champion.

00:04:18

He named all of his boys George. Wouldn't you think that would get confusing at some point? And that they will learn not to listen to that word. In the house, let's say maybe with my friends and you could also put somebody who names their puppy, This!. Because that word gets used a lot. It could be confusing. We're not talking about that right now. We're talking about George Foreman. Let's get back on this.

00:04:45

So, there are words that create confusion because of how we may use them at one point versus another. The fourth category for our dogs are words that make them happy. So obviously, you know the words that are going to make your dog wag their tail and put their ears up and get them all happy. You know, "Good dog." "How good are you?" "Who's a good dog." You know, I tell my dogs I love them all the time and they wag their tail. And let's face it we don't know what our dogs are understanding, but science has proven they understand tones. The tone we choose to use tells way more to a dog than the actual words that we use.

00:05:24

The last category of words are words that make that dog afraid or stressed, unhappy, however you would like to call it. Those are obviously words that we say emotionally. If you are angry, "What did you do?!" Or phrases or words that are followed up by you going all spider monkey on them, right. That they learn to, "Uh-oh, that's a trigger that something bad is going to happen." Let's hope that that category is almost near zero. That really, we don't want our dogs ever to be afraid of us. So, words like, "Ah-ah!" "No!" "Hey! What are you doing?!" Those sorts of things.

00:06:10

My dogs actually, they don't even respond to. "What are you doing, you're clearing your throat?" "What's going on there?" So those are the five categories of words. And if you are using a word in dog training, you would hope that they'll all go into category number one. *Sit* and *down* for me, go into category number one.

00:06:31

One of the five most popular words, the word *stay*, I just choose not to use because I find it redundant. If I asked my dog to sit, there isn't an automatic time expiration on that. Like that doesn't mean sit for five seconds and then you can walk away. *Sit* means sit there until I give you a release word.



The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use

00:06:51

So, the word *stay* is redundant. Quite often, people combine those words, and they take a word that could be something that the dog would respond to and they put it into a word that's confusing when they say things like "sit down". People come into my house, if my dogs are jumping on them, which you know, it does happen. They'll say to my dog, "sit down". Really do you want them to sit or would you like them to down? Because you've just magically said, I want you to do both at one time. That's not possible.

00:07:22

So, you take cues and they become confusing. Words they should know, and you slip them into a category that is confusing. So, the word *stay* to me is redundant. I choose not to use it. So now we're down to the four words. You know I used to find one redundant, there're two more. The next word is the word *come*. I think it's a great word and I used to train my dogs to come to the word *come* only in emergency.

00:07:50

So, I train it and train it and train it. I train it every day and I would never use it unless it was life-threatening because I wanted something that I could pull out that they would go, "Fire alarm! I'm coming." Like there is no question. It's a lifesaver. That's a special word. I just happened to not use it. I actually use a whistle and you know I'm not going to do my 'super loud stadium', 'my football team is winning whistle', but you know, like this so that my dogs understand means, when whistle to them, that's the same as the word *come*.

00:08:27

So, I don't use the word *come*. I have no problem with people who use it as long as you use it and your dogs always respond to it. The last word process of elimination, the word *OK*. Is a word I would never use. Never. Because it falls into the category you want it to be a word that they respond to, but it becomes a word to either ignore or be confused or unsure of.

00:08:57

How does that work? Because we say that word so often. Just like the word *this*, sometimes was confusing to my puppy. So, most of the time I call her by the nickname, which by the way George Foreman did with his children. He gave them all nicknames and he never really called any of them George. So, most of the time I'll call her *Thiser*. She understands *This!* when it's just her and I, but she's learned to ignore it when I say it in conversation, because we say that word a lot.

00:09:29

So, my best advice to everybody is to select words for cues that the dog doesn't hear very often and are very specifically mean one thing. For example, in the sport of agility, my dogs have microseconds to respond to a verbal cue because they're going so fast. And so, most of my cues I've changed from words to sounds because dogs can respond to sounds. And they don't hear those things like one of my cues is "lalalalalala". They know what that means in the agility field. And it's not something I ever use in conversation.

00:10:13

All right. So, the word *OK* is just used way too often. And for me, it came to a head when I used to use that word. And why do we use it? It's tradition.



The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use

00:10:26

That's what everybody taught way back at the turn of time when we started training dogs and has been handed on down and nobody's given it a second thought. Why do I use the word *OK*? I was taught that. It's been taught for hundreds of years that way. But let's do things intentionally with our dogs. And if you're sitting there saying, "Oh, I already taught the word *OK*." Don't worry. I'm going to share with you how you can simply change it. I'll teach that at the end of this today.

00:10:51

And so, I was with my first three dogs, I would take them for walks and if it was muddy, I'd have them all hang out on a mat by the front door. And I would go up and I did a lot of work from home and I would work from home and when an hour or so would go by and I'd figured they were dry, I would say, "OK, come on up."

00:11:09

The challenge happened when if I'd get on the phone and I'd start out laughing, "Hahaha! OK!" And then all these dirty dogs would run up the stairs and I'd be like, "What the H-E- double hockey sticks are you doing?" And I'd realize, "Oh, I was talking to my friend and suddenly I did say, OK." So, if you then get mad because they released, well, that's just a really poor release word.

00:11:40

One of the most common words that you use in everyday life, you want to have a very specific meaning to your dog. Just, it really is a poor choice of words to use in dog training. So, I changed almost instantly when I had that realization. I changed all of my dog's release words to the word *BREAK*. It's a word I don't use very often.

00:12:02

You can pick any word and the tone makes a difference. So, I've had heard people say "re-lease". And that's not a tone you normally talk in unless you are an auctioneer or a five-gate horse trainer. I don't know, some of them, no, maybe not. "Walk on." I don't know. So, you pick a word or a tone that means something different.

00:12:28

So, I have friends that use the word "*free*". Which means you're free now to move. Which sounds like a great word, it makes sense to you. But if you are one of my online students or thinking about being one of my online students at any point in the future, I strongly encourage you do not use the word *free*. Because every one of our programs, one of our foundation games is the **1 2 3 game**. And we play it all different sorts of ways. I might say "one, two, three, get it." I might say "one, two, three, three, three", to see if they're really listening for the word, get it or break. It depends on what I'm playing. So, if your word is *free*, you're asking your dog to differentiate between one, two, three, free. A little unfair.

00:13:22

So, I don't recommend that word. *BREAK* is the one that I use. And again, I recommend you pick a word that isn't commonly used. Now let's talk about changing things up. So, you get some clarity to your dogs. And when you have clarity, the words coming out of your mouth are no longer like Charlie Brown's teacher, "Wah, wah, wah". The words have meaning, and your dogs will respond to them because they're only used in certain situations.



The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use

00:13:54 Creating Clarity: Changing Your Cue

All right. We're going to ask your dog to sit. They know what the word *OK* means. You're going to ask your dog to sit and then you're going to say the word *BREAK*, which means nothing to them. But you're going to follow that up with the word *OK* and you're going to then reward them. So, "sit", you can move around if you want to, you know, do a little bit of a hold position until I release you game. And then you're going to say "BREAK". And they shouldn't move if they're really good at their sit, understanding of sit. Then say the word "OK" and reward them.

Move to a new location, practice it again. After doing this, so I would say do it five times at once and then don't do it at all. Right. That's it. We're going to do it again in maybe an hour or two hours. And whenever you think about it, you're on your way from the TV to the refrigerator. Of course, only to get a juice infused water, nothing else. And do it a couple of times there.

What happens, dogs are brilliant. They are programmed to predict what's going to happen next. They are brilliant at picking up patterns of reinforcement. And so, they will learn that *BREAK* is a predictor of the word *OK*. And depending on how well you've taught the word *OK*, it might take several sessions. It might take two or three. It might take a week of this.

00:15:20

So, my first dogs I had trained the word *OK* pretty well, so it took a little bit to get them convinced I really did mean that you can move on the word *BREAK*. But they will figure it out. And then you don't, you just drop saying the word *OK* once you've got them moving out of position on the word *BREAK*.

Ta-Ta-Da! You now have a brand-new cue that is meaningful, that you're moving your release word from the category of possibly confusion, unsure or worse yet just ignore it to the category of this is something I respond to. Not just once, but every time.

And that's how we get a brand-new effective cue. Now, remember if you're watching this on YouTube or if you're listening, jump on over to YouTube because you could win the prize. Seven days, I'm going to give away this prize. Not only the prop I use, but I will give you instructions on how to train your dog to use it.

Leave me a comment on this video. Be sure to like, be sure to subscribe because I've got some really cool new videos that I plan on releasing here on my YouTube channel that will help bring clarity to some of the things that I'm teaching on the podcast. You won't want to miss it.

Subscribe to the channel, hit the notification button and I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog

Resources:

[Learning Resources Answer Buzzers](#)

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

[Blog Post: Three Different Types of Verbal Markers in Dog Training](#)

[Blog Post: How Do I Train My Dog To Come When Called?](#)

[Podcast Episode 19: One of My Biggest Pet Peeves in Dog Training](#)



The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use

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>

