

Episode: #76

Leash Walking: Distracted, or Reactive Dog? These Games Will Help!

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG A common complaint we get from people who are pretty new to our programs they'll say, "Okay Susan, I played the first couple of games but my dog's still chasing kids on a bike. And I don't know when, how these games are gonna fix it." And what happens is we tend to focus on where we are and where we want to be and say, "Oh, I still don't have that." Instead of saying, "Okay, look where you started from." And celebrating and being excited by the change that you see.

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Because what you will see by playing games, even if you're just playing the games that I have on my YouTube page or on my podcast here, you're going to notice that the value that used to be only in your food or only in your toys is starting to transfer to you. That's the amazing things about games.

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And if you're in Home School the Dog or Recallers where those games are strategically layered, that's when you're going to see outcomes almost daily. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dogs. Before we get started today, I'm going to share with you part of a letter that came in from one of our Recaller students.

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This is kind of scary business. She's in Australia and as you know, Australia, they, I don't know what that poor Island did to deserve having all of the venomous creatures of the air and the earth and the water and that are all in Australia. It's such a beautiful country with beautiful people. So, one of our Recallers, she was playing in the backyard when she noticed a baby Australian brown snake that was slithering super close to her and her Australian Shepherd.

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So, she got up called her dog's name, ran towards the house. Her dog chased her. She grabbed the collar and wished him away from danger. And she said, "A few months ago before I started Recallers I'm not sure the situation would have ended so well for me, so thank you."

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Games, these games do work. And today what I'm going to share with you is some games of engagement to improve your leash walking. I know so many of you have to walk your dogs on leash. Now I have to make a point of walking my dogs on leash. I'm very blessed. I know what a privilege it is for me to live where I live, and my dogs don't have to walk on leash.

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So, I have to make a point of walking my dog on leash. So, I create games that intentionally help turn your dog's focus back on you. If you're watching this on YouTube, you are in luck because we have got some videos to demonstrate what I'm going to say today. And if you are watching on YouTube, go ahead and like, smash that like button, for me please if you would.



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If you're not watching us on YouTube, I'm going to do brilliant job of describing these games so you will be able to visualize them as you drive in your car, but please hands at ten and two. I don't want anybody getting into any trouble because of this podcast. So, when we walk our dogs on leash, it's easy to meander.

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Now I hope you're not one of those absent-minded owners that get on their phone and start scrolling through whatever, you know, sure put on a podcast, put in your back pocket and listen. But don't forget the most important job that we have when we're walking our dogs is the job of engagement. Oh, sure we want them to eliminate and do their business. That's important too, but nothing trumps the relationship that we have with our dogs.

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It's all about that engagement. So, in previous episodes, I've shared with you how important it is that you do things that engage your dog. So, [episode 74](#), I mentioned that yeah let your dog read pee mail, but make sure it is something that is structured and coming through you.

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So here on my YouTube channel recently I shared a video, it's a super important video. If you haven't had a chance to go over there yet and see it, it's called '[Perch work, Pivots and Spins](#).' And it is the foundation of getting your dog to want to be in reinforcement zone. Now, I'm just going to as a side mention, some of you were saying, you got your dog on the pivot, on the perch, but they wouldn't move.

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You need to be patient with this. Use the target stick and put it right along the dog's shoulder. They're going to turn their head to look at that target stick. And if you've got a clicker, you can click the moment that when they turn their head, that causes the opposite rear leg to step. You've got to be really patient.

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Look at those back legs and click them when they start moving. Of course, feed your dog. The other thing you can do is as I showed in that video step, be patient and step towards your dog. All right. So, get your dog moving on that perch. Now let's say you've come to hear this in this podcast where you're like, "Okay, my dogs have got great perch work. They understand it."

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We need to transition now. So, I put out a challenge when I did [episode number 73](#), I put out a challenge that when you've done all the pivots on the perch, I'd like you to go a week without walking your dog and see if that doesn't help your dog to walk on leash better. And I got at least one person came back and said their German Shepherd was actually walking better just by doing stationary work without walking. Well today we're walking.

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I want to talk about how to transition that perch work to getting to move forward. All right. So, we're going to start by playing just the game of search. Now you've heard my podcast before. Search means you now have permission to go and look for the cookie that I threw.



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So, we're going to get our dog on the perch and you're going to say the word "search", and then you're going to throw your hand back. Now a little game within a game that I'd like you to play is, I want you to not have a cookie in your hand and make the motion like you're going to throw the cookie back and see if your dog lifts one paw off the perch or even worse, leaves. We want our dog to stay at our sides. Remember, be seen on our seam. That's what I kept saying in [episode number 53](#). And we want our dogs to walk beside us.

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Now that doesn't mean I want your dog to stare up at you the whole time you're walking, but they need to be on a loose leash so that they're not pulling you somewhere or dragging you over somewhere else. And remember, [episode number 74](#), for those times that I do allow my dogs to have some time scenting, because scenting is a great release for your dogs.

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So, scenting very, very different than the word search. That's a podcast all on its own. And I am going to get to it at some point because it's getting to be a little bit of a pet peeve, of mine when I see people, getting the two of them mixed up. So, we got on our perch, we're doing search and then we're going to pretend to throw our hand back. And if the dog stays in position, touch your out seam of your pants, feed your dog.

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Remember that's our target zone that we want to build value for. Out seam, feed. All right. So, nothing new, this is just building value for reinforcement zone, combining search with fake searching. Right. So that's the first game I want you to do. Search, come and let the dog drive back to reinforcement zone. We're doing this with a dog on a leash, right.

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Because we want to get the dog used to. If you stray, fly back to position, we've got that. Now, here comes the pivot, that is the important pivot for all of us who are walking our dogs in the city. Now for you who are listening, I'm going to give you this visualization. Imagine you're walking in a straight line, let's call it the direction of North. You're heading North.

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Your dog is on your left side. Now there's two ways that you could turn to go back down South. One is you could turn away from your dog, which means when you turn and start heading back South, your dog was going to still be on your left side. Right. Even if you were walking North and you turned exactly right on the same spot and you're following the same line back out walking South, your dog would still be on the same side.

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Now that isn't a great turn to do when you're out walking your dog and you want to get their attention or get them away from potentially super huge distraction. Let's say you see, like, there's somebody up ahead of you like throwing pieces of steak all over the floor, all over the sidewalk. You know, one of those steaks' throwers. You know, we don't want our dog to see that if you did what I call a turn away from the dog to go on the opposite direction. There'd be a point where your dog would be closer to the steak thrower than you were.



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That would be bad because now you're saying to your dog, would you like to go to the steak thrower, or would you like to go with meagerly little me? You don't want them to have to make that choice. So, turn number two, this is a turn towards your dog, and this is what it looks like.

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Dogs on your left, same scenario, you're heading North, and you see the steak thrower. And now what you're going to do is you're going to turn towards your dog and head back South. So, your dog actually is like you and your dog come together. Like you're folded together. Your dog started on your left heading North, but when you turn towards them and start heading South, the dog ends up on your right.

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So, it's a way of changing sides which is brilliant because it keeps your dog's focus on you. And that's what we're going to start on our perch. So, we have our dog on your right side, and you're just going to turn towards your dog, and you started very close on your perch facing one direction. You're turning towards your dog, and you're still going to be very close to your dog facing the opposite direction.

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So, your dog is just going from a reinforcement zone on your right to reinforcement zone on your left. When your dog has got this really good just throw in the word pivot. So, your dog will now know when they hear the word pivot, you're going to just do that turn towards them. So just practice that on the perch until your dog is brilliant.

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I want my dog, Oh, I might do a search, they come into reinforcement zone, I have them in a sit, I'll say the word "pivot" once I know they're going to do it and I get them on the other side, I basically have just, just turned a little circle right beside that perch. The dog goes from being on my right to being on my left. It's like magic, but not really. But the steak thrower is still not going to distract my dog, right. Now that is a beautiful thing.

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So, what we want to do is we want to try this on something smaller, because when we go for a walk, we're not going to have this big perch. So, you might take like a brick or anything you find, a flat stone when you're out walking. And before you get walking, just warm up with this pivot game. Dogs in reinforcement zone, extra long leash.

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Now the leash, if you're watching this on YouTube, that leash is one that I get from [4MyMerles](https://www.4mymerles.com). I love those leashes cause they're super long. I can play games like this and keep my dog on leash. So, when I'm playing in the city it's super safe.

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So, play the search game, they come and maybe put their feet on a rock, or I've just found a brick and then you're going to do a pivot and you're facing the opposite direction. You can transition to something that you can carry with you. So, what I've got, I've just got a hard piece of rubber. It's pretty stiff so it doesn't bend, and I covered it in our yoga mat, and I'll put that on the ground.



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You might start it on the brick and then you're going to put it on the ground so the dog will do the same behavior of pivoting from being on one side to on the other side on that little, small target. And then they, you know, that target can be a candy wrapper. You know, it could be a chocolate bar wrapper if it was dark chocolate that was vegan, and you could eat at first and I'm, okay I'm going somewhere we probably shouldn't go right here on this podcast.

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Let's talk dog training. Now you've played that game. You said pivot, change directions, let's go cray-cray and try it on the flat. Now remember "our dogs always do the best we can with the education we've given them". So, don't jump steps here.

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Get a really thorough education. I mean, it's just fun engagement with your dog. Every time you feed your dog during this game remember what do you do first? It's a test. Put it in the comments. Let me see you know before we feed our dogs when we're playing any of these games in reinforcement zone, what do we do? Yeah, I see somebody's got it right.

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You take the cookie, you touch your seam and then you put it in your dog's mouth. So now we've got this game we're walking North, we turn towards our dog, whatever side our dogs started on, now they're on the opposite side. You say the word "pivot" and they know you're about to turn and then now they're on the other side. It's a great way to get your dog's attention. You might do two or three pivots in a row.

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Like maybe you go away from the steak thrower, but you go "Man, I really got to go back in that direction." So, I'll, you know, get the other dogs in the neighborhood to clean up the steak and then you're gonna switch back to the opposite direction. I live in a weird neighborhood. I know, I don't have steak throwers. I just, you know, crazy example.

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All right. So that's a game of pivot. It's a great game to play with your dogs. Okay. We're going to do another game. We're playing another game. And what are these games doing? They're building value for reinforcement zone. They're making your dog want to be there and they're taking the food that you might be training with and we're putting the value of that food into being in this position. It's going to make leash walking fun for your dog. It's going to make your dog want to be near you when you're leash walking. Okay. Intentional layers to build success.

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Okay. Now next game, you're going to have your dog facing you, which most of your dogs are going to want to do. And you're going to feed them in reinforcement zone but they're facing you. And now you're going to back up. Now big caveat, big highlight danger Will Robinson, I want to give you a warning. Anytime I'm asking somebody to back up, there is a challenge, you might trip over your feet and hurt yourself. So, if there's a challenge of that happening, have a spotter behind you. Somebody that walks behind you when you're backing up that they can be there to catch you should something untoward happened.



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Like we trip over our own feet. Things could happen. I just want to warn you, have somebody there to help you. I do not want to see anybody get hurt here. And you're not running. You're just backing up. Your dog has got their head in reinforcement zone. You're just feeding them in reinforcement zones, it's just that their heads are going in the opposite direction. You might go one, two then say the word "pivot", and now you're going to move forward so your dog gets in reinforcement zone again.

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So, these are games you can play when you're out walking your dog. So maybe I have my dog walking and I see another dog coming towards me and I don't know if my dog gets too excited when they see that dog so I might just start walking backwards, say the word "pivot".

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My dog goes from being on my side, heading forwards to walking backwards. I can feed them walking backwards toward me. I say "pivot" again and then we can walk forward. Or they're walking forward, I say the word "pivot" and we're going back in the opposite direction. All right, two games. Now, last thing I want to share with you, we've talked about search, great way for your dog to break some stress.

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Another great way to break some stress that I love to do with my dogs is teach them to [tug on their leash](#). Now I could hear, see some of you going "Susan, everyone tells me don't let my puppy tug on the leash." Why? That's because sometimes the dogs, they think the dogs are getting control of all the games.

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But when we play games intentionally, that doesn't happen. So, I will get my dogs to tug on the leash and again, a nice leash that's braided and fleecy and fun. They're going to want to tug on it. And I just as like a great fun stress-reliever and when I'm walking my dogs, I don't have to have a separate toy.

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And so, once you get your dog who loves to tug on the leash, and you can do this away from walking them, then what you're going to do is put the leash on, have them sit in position, and it's a game of [ItsYerChoice](#). Now if the dog just grabs at the leash, she's crazy about it, I want you to break this away, put the leash in a bag and put it down in front of the dog, open the bag and pull out the leash. If they grab for it, put it back in. This is a game of ItsYerChoice but instead of having cookies in your hand, you're putting a leash in a zipper bag.

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Unzip it, pull it out, if they grabbed for it, put it back in and zip it up until they can learn that they have to not grab for the leash until you say, "get it" and then they can tug. So, once you've got that kind of understanding, the dog can be on leash. You can put the leash in front of them. They're not going to get it because they know the game of ItsYerChoice. It starts with just a little handful of cookies. And if you've never played ItsYerChoice, I'm going to put a link in the show notes where you can join in the ItsYerChoice summit. All right. So that leads to being able to do it on leash. And then you've got a great release for your dog.



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A lot of times when you're playing tug with your dogs on leash, it tends to invigorate other dogs in the environment. So, it's a great stress reliever, but before you turn and let your dog tug on leash, take a look around the neighborhood and take a look around your surroundings and be confident there's no other dogs nearby. Because that might escalate the other dogs to want to join in on the fun or say to your dog, "Why are you growling? Your mother wears army boots and let's have a discussion about it." All right.

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So again, I always give you warnings to be safe. When you're playing these in your own house, have at it. All right. But if we're doing them outside, it's a great stress reliever outside. I love to play tug on my leash with my dogs, but I'm always aware that it's a safe environment. AKA, we don't want other dogs nearby so that things might cause more of a challenge than we really need.

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Okay. That's it for Shaped by Dog. Hey, I would love for you, I'd love to put another challenge one more week like I did an [episode number 73](#). I'd like to challenge you to play these games in your living room, in your backyard, in your front yard, just short walks. Now, when I play these games with my dogs, with my puppy This!, I can maybe get her focused attention maybe for four or five steps right now, because I've not done a lot of leash walking.

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So, don't be in a hurry to try and walk around the block after you've played this once. If you want your dog walking on a loose leash beside you, you're going to be patient. So, who's in for another one-week challenge to play some games and get our dogs walking on that loose leash. Let me know. I'd like to know. I'd like to hear from you. All right. That's it for Shaped by Dog. I'll see you next time.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 74: Yes, Susan Garrett's Dogs Sniff On Walks](#)

[YouTube Video: Susan Garrett's Perch Work Dog Tricks \(Pivots and Spins\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 73: Why Your Dog Is Still Pulling on Leash and How To Fix It](#)

[Podcast Episode 53: Stop Your Dog Pulling on Leash and Start Walking Together](#)

[4MyMerles Leashes](#)

[Blog Post: Improve Your Dog Training By Playing Like A Dog \(Tugging\)](#)

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



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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