

# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG This week, I've put up a social media post with my puppy doing some cavalettis, and I got a question on that post. It is probably the most common question I get, and that is, "Susan, how many hours a day do you spend training your puppy or training your dog?" Super common question. And I thought that's going to make for a great podcast.

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Today I'm going to answer that question by walking you through a typical day in the life of one of Susan Garrett's dogs or puppies. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And if you're watching this on YouTube, let's make our relationship official. Will you help out? You just hit the subscribe button now and turn on your notification bell. That way, every time I do a new podcast, or I go live here on YouTube, you're going to be the first to know.

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Right after I saw that question, I put up a poll in my Instagram stories. And I asked the question, how many hours a day do you interact with your dogs? And I gave several different options, like less than an hour, more than an hour, et cetera, et cetera.

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70% of the people answering and there was almost 1900 people saw the post, and 605 people actually replied to it. The vast majority, more than 70%, said that they interact with their dogs more than three hours a day. And I thought, I was surprised, I was pleasantly surprised, but I was surprised. And so, I thought define the word interact.

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Now, if you're listening to this for the first time and you didn't see that question, how would you answer that question? How many hours a day do you interact with your dog or puppy? And how would you define the word interact? Now I would personally use that word interaction to be like, how do you define your [relationship with your dog?](#)

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Esther Perel has this great quote, 'The quality of our relationships defines the quality of our life.' I think that's so true. And so, then think about how would you define your relationship with your dog? Actually, asked that on Instagram as well. One word to define your relationship with your dog. Is it like combative on one end, or is it cooperative at the other end? Like where, where do you lie there? Is it a dictatorial leader, or is it a compassionate and curious leader?

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What is your stance on how you interact with your dog? And if I asked your dog, what one word would your dog use to define your relationship? Those are really valid questions to ask ourselves. And I am getting to the dog training, and believe me; I think this might be one of the most important podcasts that I ever put out that isn't specifically about any part of dog training.



# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

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It's actually about the training between the training. Kind of like [the thing before the thing](#). Susan Scott wrote this book called '[Fierce Conversations](#)' and I love this line in it; it's right near the beginning of the first chapter. And I think I've quoted it before. She says, "the conversation is the relationship". And that's why I say the interactions with our dog is the relationship. If you are a parent or you have coworkers, what kind of interactions do you have with them?

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And this goes back to people who said I interact with my dog more than three hours a day. Does that mean you're in the same room with your dog? You're watching TV, and he's lying down beside you. So, your interaction with your coworkers is it that you say hello and then you kind of silently eat your lunches and you don't ask about how was your day or if you're a parent you don't ask really probing and interesting questions to your kids.

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Like what is that interaction like? So that would have been my answer. I interact with my dogs more than three hours a day. Now I recognize some of you may not be home that much because you have to work and maybe you work two jobs, maybe you're farther away, and I'm hoping somebody comes in and let your dog out in between. And so, then you go to sleep.

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Right. So, there might not be as much as three hours a day, but you have Saturday. So, on average, what does it work out to. The conversation is the relationship, those interactions, those are the relationships. And if we want that relationship to be "we're seen as a compassionate and curious leader," we have to rehearse that.

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And the way to rehearse that is to be intentional with your interactions with your dogs. And I think that's one of the biggest differences between myself and a lot of other people who own dogs but don't think of dog training in the same way that I do. Every interaction is a rehearsal for the relationship that I want to have with my dog.

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If I'm curious and compassionate, then that helps me to rehearse being curious and compassionate with people in my life. And I think that congruency for me personally is super, super important. Now you might think, "Well, I don't have time to be intentional about everything, and I just want my dog to be a dog." But I just want to remind you that dogs are always learning. They never take downtime. And it's the same with people. Every interaction, every conversation we are either growing and deepening a relationship or we're distancing a relationship. And it's so true with our dogs.

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So, are you putting money in that relationship bank or are you withdrawing? Now you know you could say, "Well, like at night we're just sleeping in the same room." Well, you're not really interacting, then are you. So, I'm talking about interactions; whether they're intentional or not, they are still either growing or eroding a relationship. So let me walk you through what typically happens around my house and how I get the training done before I have to do the training.



# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

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I wake up generally between 4:30 and 5. It's really just how, whatever I wake up, if it's you know, around 5 I'm good with that. And the first bit of training happens immediately in that my dogs are expected to do absolutely nothing. I have five dogs in this house. I wake up, I go about my morning routine and none of the dogs even raise their head. They keep sleeping where they're sleeping. They don't go, "Hey, Hey, good morning." They just keep sleeping where they're sleeping.

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[And how does that happen?](#) It happens because when they're a puppy, I wake up at five o'clock, I take them out on leash. I don't say anything to them. I let them do their business. I put them in their crate, in my bedroom, and then I will lay down for maybe, I don't know, five minutes, and then I'll get up. Now during the night, especially when I have a puppy, I will make sure that I get up at least once in the night to go to the bathroom so that the puppy learns I get up, I leave, I come back.

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I get up; I leave, I come back. And so, I grow that time that I leave until they can chill in their crate for two hours. And my puppy This!, she's eight months old, and she's now for the last three nights, got to sleep loose in my bedroom. And sure enough, when I got up at five o'clock, she did not stir from her bed. She kind of looked up at me and then put her head back down to sleep.

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That five to seven in the morning is my time when I go through my routine. So, I'm intentionally not interacting with my dogs. Now let's talk about what happens next. I will go and let my puppy out of her crate. In order to have training between the training, you have to be ready with [reinforcement](#).

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And so, reinforcement number one could be the obvious, a cookie, a toy. So that's one and two could be a cookie or a toy. Number three could be praise, "Good dog!" "Oh, how cute!" Or your attention, just you looking and smiling. It could be glaring and yelling; that's still attention. That's still, you know, reinforcement to some dogs. Number five could be [permission](#) to do something else. So that could be the reinforcement.

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Number six could be just a game with you, like a game of chase. So just physical interaction with you. So those are the six biggies. Food, toys, praise, your attention, permission to do something, and interactive play just physical, maybe chasing or rassing with you with no food or toys involved. So those are six basic ways that I might reinforce my dog.

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Now around my house, I have little tiny dishes with a mixture of different value dog treats in there. And I have one here in my office. There is one at the bottom of the stairs here, which is right near the two main doors that we go in and out of, there's a little bowl of food at each one of those. I have one in my bathroom, and I have one in my bedroom, and there's one in the kitchen, and there's one downstairs in the gym. So those are where the little pockets of food are that are handy. Now I often wear hoodies like this where I have treats in the pockets. So, any time I want to catch my dog doing something amazing, I'll generally have reinforcement on me.



# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

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Now I can still reinforce them if I don't, but I generally do. So, first thing in the morning, if I'm going to get like my puppy when she was sleeping in her crate, I will open the crate door, release her. Permission is the first reinforcement, and then I know she's going to stretch. So, I will have a clicker with me because I have been capturing the behavior of stretching. And I'll give her a cookie, and then we kind of go make our way to the front door. And there's the next reinforcement.

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The first dog, when I say, "okay guys, we're going outside." the first dog to the front door in a sit gets a cookie. And if Tater Salad actually comes with one call, he gets a cookie too. Tater is not a morning dog. He would prefer he didn't have to go outside before 10:30 in the morning. That would be his preference, but I digress. So, they go outside, and they get reinforcement and they come back in and the next event that happens is I give Swagger his pills.

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And that's kind of a team event because anytime you're going into the fridge to get out food, you have a collection of volunteers to take the pill. And so, if you go to a location, anytime I go into the dog fridge, if you go to a location that is away from where I'm preparing food, you potentially could earn reinforcement.

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And so, when I'm getting the pills ready, some dogs will adopt a position in a dog bed. Others will go into a kennel. And if you don't give me sass by barking at me, then I will give you a cookie when I'm giving Swagger his heart medication. So those are opportunities to earn reinforcement. It's not mandatory you go in the crate, but if you'd like to earn reinforcement, possibilities there for you. Right.

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An hour later, I'll be preparing food. Now, these are days I'm defining when I don't have Kim and Chelsea here because the way my life works right now, I have two people who work for me who really help me out with the dogs, but it hasn't always been that way. Many, many years I did exactly this the same way. Now, this is my routine when I'm here alone.

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So, I'm preparing food. The same rules happen. If you're in your crate, I'm not saying every time I feed my dogs twice a day I give everyone cookies, but I might every three meals walk by and just throw a little cookie in their crate if they're in their crate and their dog bed. It just keeps dogs out of the area. I don't want dogs crowding around the food when I'm preparing it. Somebody might say something about someone's army boots, and then you know, we could have an incident. We don't have incidents. Everyone's in their spot.

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The next rule about food preparation. If you give me sass, if you bark at me telling me I'm not doing things to your liking, I just drop the spoon and leave the room. I'll go do something in the kitchen. I'll probably be in there, I don't know, five minutes and then I'll come back. Right. Because I don't want to build the thing before the thing, [podcast episode number 16](#) here on Shaped by Dog. I don't want to build in; you get fed if you bark at me. I want to build in if you bark at me; ah, you're asking me to leave the room.



# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

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Now, the rest of the dogs are gonna probably be shooting that dog really dirty looks. "Would you please keep it zipped?!" I don't know what they say to each other, but I do know I've given you lots of reinforcement for being in your crate and being patient or waiting in your bed and being patient. If you lose your patience with me, I'll just leave.

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After breakfast, one dog, it's generally Feature the oldest. I'll ask her to pick up the bowls for me so she can earn reinforcement for delivering bowls. Same way, on Thursdays, I'll ask Swagger to go to the end of the driveway and bring me the paper. So, these are just little opportunities. Sometimes I give Swagger a cookie. Sometimes we play with a toy. Sometimes we kind of tug with a newspaper. He wishes that we got the paper every day, but we only get it on Thursdays.

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Throughout the entire day, there are these opportunities for my dogs to earn reinforcement. Now I don't want you to think my dogs go through the day going, "Oh, can I get here? Can I do this? Can I shape this?" No, most of the time, my dogs are chillaxing in their beds. Sometimes Tater and This! are rassling each other. Sometimes Momentum and This! are rassling. Occasionally Feature and Momentum are rassling. But most of the time, they're chilling in the room that I'm in. Right. So, This! right now, the puppy and Swagger are in the room while I'm doing this podcast.

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Throughout the day, my dogs will have opportunities to earn reinforcement. And it could be that they jump in a Hot Zone when I go in the kitchen if I'm preparing food and they're in a Hot Zone and the younger they are, the more likely they're going to get rewards because the older dogs really, they just know they just don't come in the kitchen when I'm preparing food.

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But you've got to think now if you're making your sandwich at lunchtime and your dog's sitting around, staring at your cutting board, drooling and trying to catch food as it falls from the cutting board, that to me is a pain in the bum. But you decide what's a pain in the bum. You don't go by [my rules](#). You go by what is comfortable in your home. But just look for the opportunity to catch your dog being wonderful and use one of those six ways to reinforce them.

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When I'm preparing my meal, of course, they're in the Hot Zone. When I'm eating my meal, they're away from my table. If the Amazon delivery comes, they need to be upstairs and not near the door. And my dogs can bark at the front door, but when the door opens, they 'Okay. I've opened the door. That means everything's cool. You don't need to bark anymore.' You've got to consider how you want to live your life.

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Now I personally don't watch a lot of TV. I'll watch my Raptors on television, and when I do, my dogs, I don't mind if they come up to me like Momentum or Swagger will sit in front of me and look at me and say, "Can I come up on the chair with you?" And I will invite them up. They don't just say I'm coming up. They don't come up and whack my hand. But honestly, if they did, I probably wouldn't care because I don't watch TV that often.





# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

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You decide what your rules are based on your life as long as those rules are okay all the time. So, if you have friends over and they're watching TV and your dogs just jump on their lap, that's got to be okay if you let your dogs on the furniture. You decide. My dogs, they have to ask for permission to get on the furniture. And even then, they can only go on somebody's lap.

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Then the training happens when I take the dogs out for a walk. I'll do things like group sits and group downs, or I'll call one dog, and the rest of the dogs can ignore me and do what they're doing. I'll call one dog and reinforce them. I don't let the puppy walk with a group of dogs yet. And so, when the other group of dogs is out, I will give her something, either an enrichment toy or a stuffed toppl or something to keep her busy while we're out with the other dogs.

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When Chelsea or Kim are here, and they can take the other dogs out, I will do intentional training with her. And this week, I've been working on a duration hold that she holds different items in her mouth when the other dogs are out walking. If I didn't do that, she would run from window to window to window, watching all those other dogs outside. That's just not a good thing for her to rehearse in my mind.

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So be present to what the rehearsals are and how you can change those rehearsals. As we go on, there are things that my dogs will get reinforced for during the day. It's all about making good choices. So, if I see them, like another dog comes by and takes a toy out of their mouth, I will praise and likely reinforce with the cookie the dog who got ripped off for the toy. And then I'll go to the other dog, and I'll take the toy out of their mouth, and I'll give it back to the first one.

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If you call a dog and they, in the midst of coming to you, they body slam another dog, I'm not going to reinforce that—the thing before the thing. So, I might pat you, thank you for coming when you're called but look at your poor brother plastered against the wall. Yeah, I'm talking about the big Bulldog. Sometimes he used to get a little bit carried away. Much, much more careful now.

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Think about the thing before the thing all day long when you're rewarding your dog. If they are howling at dogs outside your door, outside your window, and you call them to you and give them a reward because they came, think about what they were doing before you reward them—the thing before the thing.

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So that's the intentional training that happens all during the day. So, when somebody says, "How many hours a day do you train your dog?" To me, it's like going up to somebody and saying, "How many hours a day do you parent your children?" Like a couple? Or do you have a time where you just like, "Okay, you're on your own, and I'm not looking at what you're doing. You just, you know, no rules. Go crazy." That's nuts.



# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

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You should always be present to the lessons that they're learning with or without your permission or blessing and guide them towards good choices so they can grow up to be a responsible part of your family. And that's exactly what I do.

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The actual formal training for my puppies, I would say if I had to take a ballpark, 75% of my puppy's training happens when I'm not training. The 25% happens in a formal way where I will go to the building, and I'll train them. It might average 30 minutes a day. My adult dogs, I would say 95% of their training happens when we're not training. And then the other 5% happens when I go to the building.

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So, depending on their age. You know, Feature might get a big [adventure time](#), but she won't necessarily get formal training. Maybe some Frisbee throws during the day. Where Momentum will get more than this, so that's the way it works. Most of the training happens when I'm not training. That's it for Shaped by Dog. I'll see you next time.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 16: The Thing Before Your Dog's Thing](#)

[Book: Fierce Conversations by Susan Scott](#)

[Podcast Episode 80: Does Your Dog Love You? Let's Talk Relationships](#)

[Podcast Episode 26: Pro Dog Training Tips to Get Your Puppy to Sleep All Night](#)

[Podcast Episode 2: Reinforcement](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 33: How Do I Stop My Dog Counter Surfing?!](#)

[Podcast Episode 27: Do Dogs Need Rules?](#)

[Podcast Episode 15: CSI Tips for Managing a Multi-Dog Household](#)

[Blog Post: Rolling out a Big Adventure](#)



# The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training

### 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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- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
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