

Why I Don't Teach "Watch Me," How to Use a Dog Treat Pouch, and More Questions Answered

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG If you've ever wondered why I don't teach a cue "watch me" or how I end a training session or even how I use a bait pouch in training today is your lucky day, because I'm going to answer five questions sent in from podcast listeners. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And let's get rolling. Thank you for these questions.

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First question is "Susan, why don't you train the cue "watch me"? Now watch me is a cue that is intended to have your dog give you their attention so that you know you guys can basically lock eyes. And I teach the opposite. So, I want my dogs to focus on work and my students' dogs, but guess what happens?

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I have the best attention anyone could ever ask for from their dogs when they're working, but it's created organically. It's a by-product of the kind of work we do with our dogs because it's their choice. And when they choose to look at me especially when I'm out walking then I'm going to reward them.

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And of course, in the sport of competitive dog obedience, I will get them to target a certain location on my body. Again, it's not my eyes. I want them targeting a little lower. So, I don't teach it, but I do have it. And the reason I don't teach it is with most of my students or not my students, but what I see when I see people who teach watch me, they tend to use it inappropriately.

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They tend to use it as a reinforcement when the dog is doing something inappropriately. So, if the dog starts, you know, looking off at another dog they'll say, "Watch me, watch me. Heads up, heads up." And you're reinforcing the dog for doing something you don't want them to do. So, you know what I might do in that instance, I might just change direction.

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And when the dog focuses on me then reward them maybe just with a smile or a touch or a word or I wouldn't think a piece of food is warranted in that situation because I don't want to chain 'you got to be bad to be good'. All right. Super good question. But really, we have great attention, but it's all developed organically when you play all these games of choice that we do.

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Second question. "I've heard it advised that you should keep your treat pouch in a variety of different locations on your body. What do you have to say on this subject?" I think that's a great idea, but I'll go one even better. I have three different types of bait pouches that I may use. One is a silicone pouch. One is one of those pouches that snaps closed that I wear around my waist. I wear them all around my waist. And the third one is like an apron. It's got a lot of different compartments. That one we tend to use just for body work, when we're doing fitness type stuff with the dogs.



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So, I have three different bait pouches; however I rarely use them in dog training. I use them like I said for fitness work, and I use them when I'm going for a walk; I'll often use a bait pouch then one or the other but not always. I don't want my dog's behavior to be attached to if they see, "Oh look, she's carting the cash today so we can be on our best behavior."

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I want that good behavior to be associated with just being with me not with any chance of getting reinforced. Therefore, I will carry reinforcement in my pockets. And I know that's something a lot of people avoid because they say, "Oh, my dogs chew if I leave my pockets hung on the back of a chair, my dogs will chew the pockets."

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Well, that's a case of it's your choice, right? And how many 30 years of training dogs I've never had a dog chew a hole in a pocket. So that's just a matter of teaching a dog [ItsYerChoice](#) right and living ItsYerChoice in every day of your life. So, I'll have food in a pocket when I train, possibly in a bait pouch, not too often. Most often, I'll have it in like a bowl, and I'll put the treats on the floor or on a low table, depending on what activity that I'm training my dog to do.

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So, the key, I think the most important thing is variety. Don't let your dog fall in love with "Yeah, yeah. She's, she's locked and loaded. I see it. It's there, so I can work now today." We don't want that to happen. Okay. Another good question. Question number three. *"How do I avoid my puppy chewing their bed in their crate when I'm not home to supervise it?"*

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Well, is anybody else at home? Because if the puppy is alone, then the answer is you can't. It's impossible to supervise when you're not there, or it's impossible for the puppy to be supervised when no one's home. But if the question is, how can I prevent my puppy from chewing their bed in their crate I'll give you a few ideas that I do.

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Number one, what I find is that puppies don't chew their beds right away. So, some might. I had one that did. I've only ever had one puppy that's ever attempted continuously to chew their bed. And that puppy went without a bed until they were about five months old. Most of my puppies don't, and I think it's because of this protocol that I use.

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And here's what I do. I keep a foam pad, a pad that—doesn't have foam in it. It's a stitched-up blanket that's in the crate, so it gives them a little cushioning for the first few weeks. Because it's more likely that they're not going to chew then, it's more likely that you know, when the puppies are wee that they are going to be in the crate and tired and sleeping. Right.

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Now in the ex-pen, I do have a nice big cushy. I've got a collection of dog beds, let's face it. I might have a bit of an issue.



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So, I have a nice big cushy bed in the ex-pen, but they're only in that ex-pen when I'm somewhere in the room supervising. And if at any time I see the puppy put their mouth on the bed, that's like putting your mouth on me when we're [tugging](#). And then that bed comes out of the ex-pen, and the bed goes for a little time out.

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The puppy doesn't get a time out; the bed gets a time out. So, the bed just goes away. I don't say anything to the puppy. I just take it out of there. And then there's other things you can play with in that ex-pen. There's always some sort of chewy thing that's age-appropriate.

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There's some sort of toy that they can't ingest anything on. So, there's things in there for the puppy. And, of course, I'm supervising what they're doing there. And you know after, I don't know, five minutes, 10 minutes, I'll put the bed back in. If it happens again, then I'll keep it out for several hours.

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Now playing this routine for the first few weeks of my pup, that my puppy's life, they kind of learn that it's just like putting your hands on me when we're tugging, don't chew the bed. Now I have no idea if it's just pure luck that most of my puppies have never chewed a bed in their crate, or is it this routine.

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So, if I see a puppy in their crate that is chewing a bed, I will take it out, and I will try a towel. Towels are less likely to be chewed. If the towel gets worked over, I take that out as well because that's a danger element. I don't want the puppy ingesting anything. Right. So, you can teach them it's inappropriate behavior to put their mouth on their beds by keeping it in an ex-pen and not necessarily in the crate until they're ready.

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And so, I will then try it, you know maybe at five months. We'll try them with a thin bed in there, and if they start chewing it up again, then we take it out, and we'll just keep trying. Now the other option is there are a lot of so-called indestructible beds on the market that you could buy. That might be another option. And then you don't have to dog train anything. Right. It's simple then.

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Ideally, the puppy is going to grow out of this phase. Fingers crossed. It's not a guarantee. But that's also a very valid option for you. Okay. Question number four. *"How can I train my dog if they don't like food or toys?"* Now there's several answers to this one.

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Number one, you can train a dog without reinforcement. You can train a dog with punishment, which I'm assuming if you're listening to this podcast, that isn't an option for you because that's not an option for me. But I just want to make it clear that there are trainers who are very proud of the fact that they don't use food or toys in their training.



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The absence of punishment becomes the reinforcement for those dogs. Right. I'm going to say that one more time. So, when you're not in trouble, that means you're doing it right. All right. So, I'm just going to get that one off the table because if you're here, that's not a road you want to take. Right.

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So, we have a dog. We want to train with reinforcement, but they don't like food or choice. So, if they don't like food or choice, let's look at that first. Most of the time, when somebody tells me their dog doesn't like food it's because food is not a scarcity. And what I mean by that is you either have food down for them all day long, you free choice, and you would want to take a look at [podcast episode number 92](#) where I talked about that.

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Or you might put their food down and leave it down, or you might put the food down, and if the puppy or dog doesn't eat it, then you take it up, and you put other tasty things in, and you put it back down. All of that is teaching a dog don't eat.

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Okay. So, we need to change that. You're going to put a small meal. So, if you feed kibble, it might be like three kibbles in a bowl. Put it down and give the dog, I don't know, couple of minutes to decide if they're going to eat those three kibbles. After a couple of minutes, pick it up, go about your business, and you might want to do this on a Saturday when you have more time.

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And then at lunchtime, you're going to do it again. Three kibbles in a bowl. They eat those "super good." Put three more in the bowl, put them back down, and then you're, you know, you're going to maybe give them half of that breakfast. So, all right. They've only had half of their breakfast. And it's lunchtime. At supper time, you're going to put down half of their supper and give it to them. After five minutes, whatever they don't eat, or if the dog walks away from the food you take it up, and you just go about time to retrain the dog.

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Now I would preface this by saying, put down really attractive food. So, the best food that the dog loves. And if it's just kibble, you might want to start by mixing that kibble with some; I don't know, some beef broth and then take it out and then feed them that. The goal is you want to train the dog to empty their bowl.

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That's the way they're going to start looking forward to meals. And then they're going to get more excited about food in general. And then when you're training, you can use some of their breakfast or what I like to do is if I was feeding kibble, which I haven't for 20 years, but I would put the kibble in a mixture with some meat and some [tasty treats](#) and some so that the kibble takes on the value of that.

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All right. So, you want to grow the value. You can grow that value by what is the one thing in the world that that dog loves? Is it greeting your husband when they come home from work?



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Ideally, that's not a great thing to do because that's a podcast on separation anxiety. We really don't want to greet our dogs when they come home from work. Well, the dog probably doesn't come home from work. Probably you or your partner does, but you don't want exciting greetings. But whatever it is that your dog loves—going for a car ride, going for a walk, meeting another dog. What you're going to do is get them to eat one piece food before they get the chance to do that.

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And if they, you know, just keep moving it the distance away, if they're "Oh no, I got to see my buddy. They're right there." Just move them away. "Eat this cookie." They eat it. Then you can say, "Go play." It's called the [Premack principle](#). We're transferring the value. The value of their best activity goes into eating something for you. And that's how we start training the dog to eat.

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So how do you train a dog when they don't like food or toys? Well, the first thing we do is train them to like food or toys. Okay. All right. And our final question, "*Susan, how do you end a dog training session?*" This is a really, really common question. One that comes up for us a lot.

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So sometimes, the end of a training session for my dog is obvious. So, I might be in the building, and then I leave the building. I might be in the building, and I put them in their crate because I'm training another dog. And if I'm releasing them out of the crate, then we're, you know, we're just going back into the house, or we're going wherever.

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Sometimes I take them out of the building, and they get to go for a swim. If I'm training at home, I might leave one room and go into another room. If I'm crate training, it's just releasing from the crate. Now the big question is if I think of training really as relationship building. It's relating. That's what training is.

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It's just deepening the bond that I have with my dog, and on the way, they're learning different skills. So, if you think of building a relationship with somebody in your home and every conversation builds or tears down that relationship. But let's just assume every conversation in your house is deepening and building that relationship with the people in your home.

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You don't have a conversation, and you know, you're sitting around, and you're, I don't know, you're talking about, "Oh, we're going to go on this camping trip, and then we're going to do this and then we're going... Okay. That sounds like a great plan." You don't have to say, "I am now ending my relating with you."

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And then leave the room. Right. And then you come back, "You know I just forgot about something. Do you want to go for dinner tomorrow night?" And they say, "Yeah, sure." "I am now once again ending my relating with you." You don't have to do that. Right. I mean, if you do no judgment. I think it's a bit weird, but no judgment.



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And the same is true of dogs. That it's relating. So, you're not going to be sitting, say, you're sitting on the floor, and you're teaching your dog to back up, and you're rewarding them. You're rewarding them. And then you'd stop and still sit there. You're going to change locations. It would be like being in the middle of a conversation with your partner, and then you're done, and you just stand there and stare at them.

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Okay. That's weird too, right? Like, think of training as relating and think of how do you have a conversation with somebody you love and then how do you end that conversation? "Good talk, we're done. Yeah." Right. And you don't actually have to announce, "Good talk. We're done." You just, yeah, you go your way. I go my way. Everyone's happy. Right.

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So, the only thing I don't want you to do is sit in the same spot because that's unfair and it's unclear. Okay. So training is relating. Just we're done. We're moving on. That's it. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for everyone who contributed and gave me some of those questions. And if you have questions that you would like me to answer, yeah, hey, leave them for me.

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Send them in to us at wag@dogsthat.com or jump on over to YouTube and leave them in the comments here. And if you are over at YouTube, go ahead and hit the like button on this video, as well as subscribing to the channel. Hitting the notification bell so that we can keep in touch you and me because you know what we're relating right? We'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

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

[Learn the ItsYerChoice Game](#)

[Podcast Episode 89: Why Dogs Should Not Tug: The Truth Revealed](#)

[Podcast Episode 92: Avoid This Big Mistake When Feeding Your Dog](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 90: Premack, Dog Training and Transfer of Value](#)



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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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