

# Dog Training: When Work Is Play And Play Is Work

### Speaker Key

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### Transcript

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SG If you've been listening to this podcast for a while, you probably know that everything I train dogs to do I do in the form of a game. We have a mantra around here. *Work is Play and Play is Work*. Today I'm going to do a deep dive how you can minimize the time that you need to train by keeping this mantra in the back of your mind.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And today, I'm going to share with you how I end up training my dog even when I'm not training my dog. I do that by looking for what's a value to my dog every day around the house and how they get reinforced for the things that they love to do. For example, Tater Salad loves watermelon. Like he's crazy about watermelon. I would say that's one of his most favorite foods on the planet.

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And he also loves lying in the sun. And so, when he's lying in the sun and his most favorite place to lay in the sun is on the window bench right in the dining area. You can find him there most days for most of the day. If the sun's out, that's where he's going to be lying, unless somebody cuts watermelon, which by the way, happens a lot around this house because Kim loves watermelon even more than Tater Salad does.

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Any time somebody starts cutting watermelon, Tater's ears perk up. And he looks around to see if anyone's giving him watermelon, which is not going to happen. But he does know that us humans love it when dogs go to their Hot Zone what we call dog beds around the house. So, he will leave his place in the sun, and he will dutifully park himself in a Hot Zone when the watermelon starts getting cut.

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It just cracks me up because there is no way he would ever be in a Hot Zone if it wasn't for the fact that somebody is cutting watermelons. It reminds me of a Terrier that I used to have, Twister. And I actually taught her to jump on a kitchen chair whenever my now passed husband, John, would start to put out dog bowls.

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Now I did that because she used to drive John crazy whining and doing Terrier screams when he was getting dinner ready. And I wanted him to keep feeding dogs, so I, of course, trained Twister to do a different behavior. And that was to sit in a chair. So, she would sit in that chair, and I would, of course, throw her the odd little tidbit whenever I was working in the kitchen.

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If no one noticed her in that chair, she would start rocking the chair back and forth. It was hysterical, like dogs do what is reinforcing. That is what B.F. Skinner taught us many, many years ago, and dogs continue to teach us. They show us where the value is. For Tater Salad, watermelon is a big one. And I'll tell you one thing that isn't a big one.



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If the sun is out and we go to take the dogs for a walk, which we do many times a day, first thing in the morning, the dogs go for a walk. All the Border Collies are out the door. Boom. You have to call Tater Salad, and if it's a really hot summer day, we actually allow Tater to say, "I don't want to go for a walk." However, it looks something like this.

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I will call him, and he comes to the door; I open the door I say, "break." He will go out the door and turn left and just collapse in the sun. And I'm like, "Okay buddy; you don't have to go this round." And here's the tough thing you're going to say "Oh, Susan, that's so mean the dog doesn't want to come. Why are you making them come? What happened to all that consent you talked about that in [episode number 106](#)?"

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I also talked about something called substitute consent. Now I did say if the dog is in pain, I will substitute my consent to help them. Now, Tater wouldn't be in pain, but I know that him going for a walk is in his best interest. It helps him live a long life. And I also know that when he gets out there, he has a blast. Now, if it's really hot out there, I let him say, "I'm hot; I'm going to sun myself." But if it isn't, then I'm going to say, "Buddy, you've got to come with me."

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And so, what happens is I'll put them on leash for the first like minute or two, and then I take the leash off, and the guy goes nuts. Like I belly laugh at him. He starts chasing grasshoppers. He goes ripping up and down the hills, and you're going to say, "Well, why would he ever say, "I don't want to go. I just want to lie in the sun." Think about this. Have you ever been in your bed snuggled under a deep duvet, and it's really, really cold outside?"

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Maybe even it's— you're in a drafty bedroom, and it's cold in your bedroom, and your alarm goes off, and you go, "Oh no, I got, I don't, I'm going to hit the snooze bar." And you're going to just hunker down there a little bit. And then you're going to; it's going to go off again. You might hit the snooze bar a couple of times before you finally brave it on the first little bit out of the cold; you hate it, but then you get dressed, and you get your day started.

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You're like, "Hey, I got a lot to do! This is awesome!" Yeah, that's called competing values. I am hunkered down in my bed, and I don't want to leave it. But once I get up and go going like, "Yeah, I'm actually got a lot to do, and I'm excited, and I'm ready to go. And off I go for my day." That's kind of like what happens with Tater.

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"I'm in the sun. I don't want to go on your little walkabout; take your little Border Collies and have at it." Competing values. "I love the sun. Watermelon trumps the sun, but yeah, your walk doesn't." But just like literally 90 seconds into the walk, he doesn't turn around and go back in the sun. He goes, "Oh yeah! This is good." So sometimes, you have to override. You have to substitute your consent because you know your dog is going to have an awesome time when they get going.



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And so, the dogs tell us where's the value. I'm going to give you another great example. My puppy This! loves to train with me, but I train mostly in the dog training building or in the house somewhere. Well, recently, I've been doing jump grids, and I've been setting them up on the front lawn, and boom, what an eye-opener it was for me. She was doing jump grids really well until Kim came out to water the flowers on the front porch, lost my puppy.

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I called her to do another grid, and she was looking at Kim and looking at the pond, and she was starting running towards Kim a little bit and then came back to me and running towards the pond, and I'm like, "what's going on?". Our dogs will always tell us where the value is. And it dawned on me that anytime Kim is outside is party time for the puppy. Because Kim goes outside when she either takes the dogs for a swim in the pond or if she takes the dogs for walks around the field.

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And so, Kim being outside there is competing values. "Yeah, I like doing grids, but she kept looking to the front door, even though Kim was nowhere near the front door, she kept looking to the front door because magically that door's going to come open and all my friends, all my family going to come running out and we're going to do fun things around the field, or maybe go in the pond." Hysterical.

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So, competing values. It made me laugh, but our dogs will always tell us where the reinforcement is. So, all that I did, I said, "Okay, Kim, can you just sit on the front porch?" And I'm going to remind her how much fun it is to do jump grids with me. Kim's not going anywhere. You don't see any other dogs out.

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Now sometimes, those competing values are so high. It's overwhelming for you, and you don't know what to do. For example, sometimes people you know they're taking their dogs to train somewhere, and there's other dogs swimming in the pond. Well, that's just so overwhelming. What I would do is do something that's super easy.

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Minimize, get out of there, and then just go back and build up to, all right, there's going to be a pond but no dogs, or there's going to be a kiddie pool and dogs in that kiddie pool. Dogs will always tell us what the competing values are. And it always makes me laugh. And remember, what's reinforcing to a dog? Obviously, food, obviously toys, permission. Remember in [episode 11](#); I talked about the power of permission.

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Permission is a big thing, but it's permission to do activities. And so sometimes, like around this place in the morning, I always get a belly laugh because This! will get doing the zoomies. And then she's doing the zoomies with her mother, but then Tater Salad tries to get involved and he's like a dump truck without brakes. And so, he's chasing This! but if she puts on the brakes fast, like a quick little Border Collie will do, he just jumps up and over. It cracks me up. Okay. I digress. We got food, toys, permission, activities, but here's a big thing that's reinforcing for dogs. It's our attention.



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Now this works for us, and it works to get us unless we are really present to what it is that we're doing to reinforce these activities. So, one of the things that I know that I am very guilty of, and I'm present to it most of the time, is when my dogs do something, and it cracks me up; it just makes me laugh. That is my attention. And that ends up getting more of what the dog is doing.

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I bet if you think about it, there is something your dog does that you laugh at that your dog over time realizes that's getting your attention which is what they love. And so, my puppy, she— you know, before her there were no dogs in the bed. Now I have a little blanket where she's allowed on the bed. If I get up in the middle of the night, she stretched out as long as she can be. And when she hears me get up, she starts thumping her tail. Because thumping her tail makes me laugh.

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And then I come over, and I give her a little belly rub on my way to the bathroom. Always cracks me up. Another thing, in the middle of the day, I might go, "Okay, I'm going to the bathroom." and if it's anything like your house anything like mine, when I go to the bathroom, I generally get a pile of dogs that want to pile in there.

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And some days, I'm like, I just need a quick pee. And so, what I do, is I close the bathroom door. Well, the bathroom that's right at the bottom of the stairs, it's an ensuite to our guest room and it's got a little pocket door. Well, as soon as I close that door This! rips around the entire house to get into the main door, to the master bedroom, and get into that bathroom before I even get to the toilet. It always makes me laugh.

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And that's probably why she always does it. Remember laughing is attention; attention means it's going to happen more often. Like dogs that roll on bones. Why is that so funny? I have no idea, but it always makes me laugh, which means it's going to happen more often. I'll tell you something else that happens more and more frequently these days is dogs chewing bones in dog beds.

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Now it used to be, we gave dogs bones, and they could chew them anywhere they wanted. Sometimes they like, some dogs like to chew near me with the bone. Other dogs would like to be away from the other dogs. They all had their spots, and I didn't really care. Well, a while ago, I got a new carpet, and I decided I didn't really want dogs chewing meaty bones on the carpet. Like that was disgusting.

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And at the same time, Tater Salad came into the house. That was when we adopted Tater from his first home, he was 15 months old, and he came with a massive chewing problem in that he chewed furniture like a lot of furniture. And a part of the problem was he would start chewing a bone. He would push it up against a piece of furniture, and then the bone will fall, and he just chew the furniture. That was how it went. And so, because I wanted to keep the carpet clean and because I didn't want Tater to learn to chew my furniture, I had this great idea. "Hey, Kim, let's shape the dogs to chew bones in dog beds."



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And so, it was a gradual process that we built up, and it cracks me up to this day. And it is mostly Tater Salad, This!, and Momentum, because those are the three big chewers in my house. When I see them pick up a bone and walk over to a dog bed to chew it, I have no idea why it cracks me up, but it always cracks me up. They could chew anywhere, but they don't because they know that they get reinforcement. If they chew the bone in the dog bed, what happens if I see them doing that, I will get up, walk by and throw them a few cookies. I don't do it all the time, but it's often enough that it reinforces them. Sure, they get reinforcement for chewing on the bone, but it reinforces their good decision because every once in a while, they get cookies from heaven.

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They just drop down while they're chewing. They have no idea; sometimes I throw them from where I'm sitting. They get their reinforcement, it always makes me laugh. Why do these crazy things our dogs do make us laugh? I have no idea. But that will take me to dinner time around here. And my dogs obviously play [Crate Games](#), but when I'm preparing dog food, the only rule I have is you are not allowed to be near where I'm dishing out the food.

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Why is that? Because the Terriers and the Border Collies, if they were under your feet when you were preparing dinner, somebody might say something about somebody's mother in army boots, or somebody might decide they're going to resource guard me while I'm preparing food. So, I made a rule. You can be anywhere you want. But you can't be anywhere near the area where I'm preparing food.

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So, I carried that rule on when we moved into this new house. And I have these [crates built-in under a counter](#). I never once told the dogs, "You have to be in those crates." But they just started hanging out in the crates. And so, Feature would be in the crates, and she would have like three-quarters of her body in the crate, and she would be lying down, and her front paws would hang out and touch the floor. I didn't think anything of it. That would be my first mistake. And eventually, her feet would hang out on the floor, but instead of lying down, she'd be standing.

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And then pretty quickly, instead of three-quarters of her body being in the crate, like three-quarters of her body was outside of the crate and just her two back paws were in the crate. And now, as a 14-year-old dog, here's what I've got. She's decided that her shifting criteria can be her back feet only have to be on the baseboard at the bottom of the dog crate to justify her being in her crate.

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Now that makes me laugh, but I will tell you when my puppy This! started hanging her feet outside of the crate that she chose to be in; I made sure that I reinforced her when those feet went in the crate. And eventually, I know her feet will be in the crate like Tater Salad and Momentum's, and they are never going to be like her grandmother Feature's and be all the way out the crate. Now here's what I do. I said, I have no rules other than don't be under feet. You can't be near where I'm feeding. But if you choose to go in the crate, I am going to reinforce you for all your paws being in that crate. And if your front feet touched the ground, I'm going to stop feeding and just turn and look at you.



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And of course, when I stop and look at my dogs when there's food around, they go, "Oh, game on. Uh, are we shaping behaviors?" And they're going to offer different things. They're going to offer backing up into that crate, and I'm going to reinforce them. And that's how I get the happy household with everybody doing what I'd like them to do. I could shape those puppies right from the time that they come into my home that this is where I need you to be when feeding time starts, but I don't really care. So, Swagger, for example, he stays up in my office when anybody's preparing food for dogs. He does not come downstairs to eat until he's invited.

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You actually have to call him to dinner every single time. I know that's a little weird; most dogs are going to be right there. But it is what it is, and it's okay. Because a lot of the [rules that I have for my dogs](#) are for them to have their best life ever. I'm just consciously aware of the reinforcement you get and how that impacts me. Yes. Life's a game and *Work is Play and Play is Work* which means the things that you do in play; I have to make sure they aren't breaking any of the rules that I want to maintain when you're working with me. All right. Like I don't allow my dogs on the couch. So, when you're playing, you're not allowed to rip across the couch at any point.

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Now that's not truly working with me. But here's one, let's say you, and I are just playing a game of catch where I'm throwing the Frisbee, or I'm throwing a toy, and it's informal, and you just want to play, and I'm just throwing this for you. If at some point you ran out and you said, "I'm going to sit down and chew on this now." That wouldn't be acceptable because in play, we are following the same rules that we do in work. And if I throw you a toy in work, you're never allowed to say, "We're done here. I'm going to go off and play." Now obviously, I would never get to a point in work where you were ever tired or physically unwell that you would want to quit work, but I never want you to say, "Uh, I'm not playing that game with you anymore." And so, I would never throw a flying disc or throw a ball or do any kind of retrieve game to the point where you would want to walk away. I would always quit before the dog wanted to. Because that's the way, I maintain the relationship I have with my dog and work. And *Work is Play and Play is Work*. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 2: Reinforcement](#)

[Podcast Episode 94: How the Best Professional Dog Trainers Use Reinforcement](#)

[Blog Post: TOP Say Yes Training Reminders](#)

[Blog Post: Who's Shaping Me?](#)

[Podcast Episode 106: Consent In Dog Training: The Misuse, Misunderstanding And Misapplication](#)

[Video Blog: Built In Dog Crates For Home Décor](#)

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

[Crate Games Online](#)

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



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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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