

How Dog Training Goes Better When You Begin With The End In Mind

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Anytime I get asked the question, "Susan, how do I start a training plan for this behavior?" I always answer it the exact same way. It doesn't matter what this behavior is. Today I'm going to share with you exactly how I answer that question. And more importantly, the two big reasons why it's so critical for every behavior training.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. I'm going to start by sharing a story with you that happened a couple summers ago. I had a friend who I kind of corralled into going for a bike ride with me because here's the thing, when you get to be 60 years old it gets harder and harder to get people to go for a longish type of bike ride with you.

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And so, I talked to friend into going with me and she said, "Okay, but I haven't been bike riding since I was a kid so you're going to have to help me to remember it." And so, we went to a parking lot, and this is what I did. I said, "You're going to now get up on the bike and put one foot on the ground and the other foot you're going to put on the pedal. Your hands are going to be on the handlebars with your hands around the brakes. So, you're going to do one pedal, brake, shift your butt off the seat and come down on your other leg. So that one leg never ever got to a pedal."

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"Put your foot up on the opposite pedal that the leg on the is on the ground, take a pedal, get your butt on the seat, hit the brakes, come off the seat and put that foot on the floor." She wanted to be reminded how to ride a bike. What the heck was I doing? I was doing the same thing I tell everybody who wants to know how they should start their dog training plan. I was beginning with the end in mind. Because what good is it if I teach her how to ride a bike if I don't teach her how to stop safely.

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So, the very first lesson we had was how the heck do you dismount and not hurt yourself once you hit the brakes. So, it's so important with our dogs that we keep this in mind, but here's the thing, it rarely happens that way. Take any behavior, how often do people throw a toy with the dog before they ever teach the dog how to bring it back?

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And so, what they end up doing is trying to cajole the dog "Atta boy, bring it back! Atta boy, atta boy!" or they bribe them "Oh look what I got? I got a cookie! I got another toy! Come on, bring it back!" And if that doesn't work, they get angry "Hey! You! You bring it right now!" Right? You never taught the dog how to bring it back. You didn't begin with the end in mind. Look at how many people take their dogs off-leash, "Come on, let's go have fun." And they don't think, "Well, what are the chances that he's going to come back?" In [episode number 119](#) here on Shaped by Dog I did a whole session on how to end your training.



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Yeah, it's great that I'm teaching you how to train a dog, but it's really important that you understand the importance of ending a certain way so that the dog knows 'this is now my time, this is not dog time'. There are so many behaviors that people try to teach a dog without teaching them the end. A sit-stay for example, they teach the dog to sit and immediately start telling them to "stay, stay, stay, stay, stay." And what is the dog doing while they're saying "stay, stay, stay?" The dog is trying to leave. Why is that? Because you didn't teach them the end.

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Think of a big open field in the middle of winter. Now if you are in subtropical conditions try to imagine like camping out in a walk-in cooler for a little while. And you know maybe it's your dad's place. And he says, "Okay, I've got a job for you." "There's like a hundred fence posts in one side of the field and a hundred on each of the other three sides. What I need you to do is start putting these new wires on these fence posts."

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"Well, how many wires?" "Now just don't ask questions, just start adding the wires to the fence posts." And it's winter and it's cold and you're twisting them and you're going "Well okay I've done three is that enough?" "No, that's not enough. Keep going, keep going." And so, you're like, "Okay I've got almost a 10th of this row done. I think that's enough, right?" "No, just keep going. You've got to keep going." "Why do you keep stopping? You know, you're gonna make this job longer if you keep stopping." Sound familiar?

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What if that whole field was filled with snow and you got the opportunity to drive a snowmobile and so you're out there "Oh, it's just so much fun driving the snowmobile through the snow." and you've gone 10 seconds and they say, "Hey, come on back in its someone else's turn." "Oh, no way! Hahahahaha! My turn sucker! Try and get me!" Nobody started with the end in mind, right? Like if I was going skating on our backyard rink I'd be told "Okay, you can be out there until nine o'clock and then it's your brother's turn."

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It was very clear. The end was nine o'clock. I was going to get in all the fun I could before nine o'clock. So, begin with the end in mind. Why is it so important? I just gave you two really, really good examples. Because if the behavior that you've got your dog engaged with is something they don't see a lot of fun in, they're going to constantly be trying to get out of it. Think of teaching a puppy to [sit and stay](#). How many times is that dog or puppy going to try to get up and move away? Because they don't understand, "until when is this thing over with?"

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I think of myself as a child, we drive up to the cottage and it was a two-and-a-half-hour drive and we'd be packed like sardines in this car. And I would constantly say, I'm pretty sure you've heard this one before, "Are we there yet? Are we there yet? I don't want to be in this car anymore. I need to get out. I need to do something." So, one of my brothers taught me, "Do you see this? It's a Stewart's hall. You know when we see Stuart's hall, we've only got a few more turns. And then we'd get to Mr. Chambers farm, you could see Mr. Chambers horses, you would know just one more turn and we're back to the cottage, that's it."



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And so, it gave me 'All right I know when we're getting close. I know when I can relax.' You know when the end is near. So, the two reasons why it's so important for dogs is because if it's something they don't want to do, they're going to keep trying to stop it. If it's something they really love, they're not going to stop. So, you throw a ball, and you expect that dog to bring that ball back, but they're having a great old time romping around, rolling on the ball, digging on the grass, pulling up the grass around the ball. "You're supposed to bring me back. Isn't that man's best friend? Is it not what you do?"

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Just remember man's best friend is a reflection, is a mirror, is just it's the shape of a dog but really, it's a mirror reflecting the training you've put in. And so, what you've got is what you've given. You've got a dog who didn't understand the end. They didn't understand, "Oh, you want me to both chase it and bring it back." Or something as simple as tug. Tugging on a toy and now it's, "Okay, I want to do something else so give it to me." "Oh no, this is fun. I don't want to give it to you." "No, really." And then you start the, you know, the "No! Give, it's mine! It's mine! It's mine!" Cue up the [bad dog trainer routine](#), a video that I did back with my dog Buzzy. I don't know, in the nineties at some point.

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That creates a new game for these dogs. "Tugging was fun but oh my gosh! You trying to get this out of my mouth. This is second level fun!" Any time you want to teach a behavior you have to begin with the end in mind. It's a concept called *back chaining*. So, if I want the dog to stay, the very first thing that I teach, there is a question in [episode number 121](#) that came up when I asked at the end if you would like for me to share with you how I teach duration, just leave me a comment.

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A lot of you said, "Oh yeah, I really want to know how to teach duration." People whose dogs struggle with duration on [control behaviors](#) I think there's two big things that have gone wrong. Number one they didn't understand 'until when?'. Are we there yet? Do I have to do the whole row of fences? If you begin with the end in mind, if your dad had said "You see that row of fences? You know, if you could just get 10 of them done in the next hour then we'll go and have a break with some hot chocolate and whipped cream and vegan chocolate chip cookies."

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Hey, I would do those fence posts, I think. And so, with our dog when we're trying to teach a duration behavior the two mistakes people make is they don't teach them the understanding of you hold position until you hear this word "break". And when you hear that word break you then will move. The second mistake people make is they try to teach it out in an open area, like on a leash and the dog sitting in an open or in a Hot Zone like on a cot. Best place to teach a duration and 'when are we there? When is it over?' Is in [Crate Games](#). I'll put a link in the show notes or in the description, or I'll put a little tag here on YouTube if you've not heard of Crate Games.

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And so, we've got to think of this behavior if we don't teach the dog how we want it to end, if it's something that they love, they're just going to keep doing it. And then we're going to get into, you know, an adversarial relationship with that dog. And we do not want to have an adversarial relationship with any dog. Something as simple as tug. The very first thing that I teach is I want them to engage. Yes, you go back to [D-A-S-H](#).



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We want them to have a desire to work with us. We want them to have fun. Now I won't teach the 'out' cue until I've got a dog that I know is [a really great tugger](#). And I will kind of pry their mouth open and fight them for the toy a bit, because that helps to turn on that instinct to want to hold tighter and "Oh, this is a good game." But once I see I've got a dog that loves to tug then I'm going to teach that dog an out cue.

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It's simple. It doesn't have to be a fight with your dog. And surprisingly, I don't actually use a lure. As many people will tell you "Put a cookie on the nose. A dog will spit out the toy and then you give them the cookie." I find that works with a puppy initially, but they quickly go "Hmm. Do I want the cookie more than I want the toy?" And a lot of dogs are just going to say, "I actually would like that toy."

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So, if you're interested in learning more about how I teach the release, leave me a comment here on YouTube. If you're listening to this, come on over to YouTube when you get a chance and leave me a comment. Let me know that you would like to know how I teach a release that is very different than what anything that I've found on social media and YouTube of how other trainers teach a release to their dog.

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So, let's get back, to back chaining. When you're back chaining, what you're doing is you're moving towards what you know best. And so, anything simple like if you were going to teach one of your children to memorize a poem you would teach them the last two lines of the poem. And that would be it. "Can you say those last two lines of the poem?" "Yeah, you nailed it. Come on. Let's go have hot chocolate with whipped cream and vegan chocolate chip cookies." I'm going to learn poetry now too.

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And so, once they've got those two then you're going to add one line before it. "Do you know that one line?" "Yeah." Now that one-line triggers what you know best, the final two. You see what most people do is they forward chain when they're trying to memorize. They memorize the first line, they memorize the second, they memorize the third, they memorize the fourth. Here's the problem with that. What you know best is the line you repeated the most. And those lines are behind you.

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What you don't know very well or not nearly as well are the ones that lie ahead and the further into a process you get, the more anxious you get because what you knew best is behind you. For that reason, in [the sport of dog agility](#) where I have to memorize how 21 obstacles are laid out on a course. I always break that course up into maybe sequences of three to four or five obstacles depending on the flow. And I just focus on the last few. And when I've got those last few then I'll add the few before that together.

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And then now I know if I'm starting at a world championship and the first three, they're easy. They're in front of me, I can see them. The ones I know best they're at the end. Those are the ones I'm running to when I'm running out of air.



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And maybe I'm a little nervous because I'm about to win a medal at the world championships. But it doesn't matter because I know those ones better than I knew any of the other ones before it. Because I back chained. And that's what happens when we train dogs with thinking of, I'm going to begin with the ending. You're always moving to a place where the dog has confidence. "Oh, I get it. I run out and I bring it back and then I put it in your hand. Yeah, I can do that." "I know, I go out and have fun. And then when you call me, I come flying right back."

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People who do competition obedience, when they lead their dog on a sit and they have to recall the dog and the dog has to sit in front of them and hold position. It has to be a very specific, accurate position. Now I guess in some venues the dog actually comes into the side. But either place there's a targeted spot where the dog lands after they've been called. Now people don't practice that recall over and over and over because that's a whole chain. And what if the dog sits crooked? Well, you don't want to reward that because it's not what you want. But then you don't want to not reward it because the dog did this [beautiful recall](#).

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For that reason, we only practice the end behavior. And I would even break it down to just practicing my dog's head position before I practice their butt in order to get really nice straight behavior. Back chain towards what the dog knows and loves, and knows, "Yeah, I'm there now. I got it." And then you're never going to have a dog who gets anxious on a stay. If you train it with confidence and joy the injection of the joy goes, "Yeah, I got this. I can do this. Yeah, no problem. Yeah, I know. I wait until she comes back and then she says, "good dog" and "break". Yeah, I like that."

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And you're always going to have a dog no matter how much fun they have they'll understand that fun goes through you. Because the behaviors were taught intentionally, not with lures or bribes but by step-by-step process that brings great outcomes, outcomes that both you and the dog are going to want to repeat. Make sense, right? Now remember if you're interested in having me do a video teaching you how I teach my dogs to release something just leave me comment. I'll see you back here next time here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Podcast Episode 119: The Rhythm Of Dog Training And How To End A Session](#)

[Podcast Episode 52: The Five Most Common Words in Dog Training and Which Ones I Never Use](#)

[YouTube Video: Building Drive by 'being' a Bad Dog Trainer \(Susan and Buzz\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 121: How To Stop Dogs Jumping Up On People](#)

[Blog Post: The 3D Model for Dog Training: Duration, Distance, Distraction](#)

[Podcast Episode 57: Why Balance Breaks Fast Track Your Dog Training \(D.A.S.H.\)](#)

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

[Blog with Video: Easy Guide to Handling by the Number for Agility Success](#)



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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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