

How Would Susan Garrett Plan Your Dog Training Sessions?

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your last three dog training sessions? And what was the criteria by coming up with those numbers? Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Today I'm going to share with you my 10-point checklist on how I plan for my own success in dog training. It's something that every single person listening to this podcast, if you want to train your dog, then I would hope you'd want to train your dog the best you can.

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It doesn't mean that you have to train every session like a world champion does, but it means that you train every session the best you can. And I promise you with these 10 little boxes that you're going to be checking off, it will exponentially improve the success you already have.

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Let's start with checkbox number one, what are you training for? Do you have a brand-new puppy? You might want to check out the [five puppy games](#) I have on YouTube. That's a great place to start for anyone with a new puppy. Or are you working on a specific behavior problem like I spoke about with my puppy This! in Shaped by Dog [episode number 66](#), where I talked about resource guarding.

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What is that behavior problem? That could be an area that you are focusing on training. Or maybe it's manners. Maybe you're trying to teach your dog appropriate way to greet your guests. I spoke about that here on Shaped by Dog [episode number 121](#). Or maybe you have specific behaviors that you're training for a sport.

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So, if you're a member of Agility Nation our online membership, or Handling360 our agility training class, we would be giving you lesson plans for each layer of your learning. Or maybe, and you don't have to be in any sport at all, your focus is fitness. So, your dog's trained pretty well or it's on the way to being trained pretty well but you want to make sure that you avoid any potential injuries because you like to go on big hikes or you like to go and play fetch at the park. So, every dog could benefit from having some fitness. Those would be the five topics that most people's dog training would fall into.

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Is it puppy? Is it a behavior challenge? Is it manners? Is it sports specific or is it fitness? Now you've decided which area you're going to focus on. The next question is [how long do you have to train?](#) Because the length of time is going to dictate what you're going to set up and train. So, do you have two minutes, or do you have two hours?

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I've had training sessions that have gone both. Now it's not one long training session for two hours, but I have gone out to the building with my dogs and trained for two hours with a lot of record-keeping in between. Nobody's tongue was hanging out. So how much time do you have to train?



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Most people the average training session of actual 'all right I've got everything set up I'm now training' might be five minutes, maybe 10 minutes. Now, checkbox number three would be what is the list of behaviors or needs that you have to train for that particular category and two questions. It's kind of two in one. Review your list of needs, and what is the priority, and what is the one that's the most fun for the dog?

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Because we're bringing both of those into this training session. So, if you have a puppy that we're training, well I've got to teach a name recognition. I want to do some work with recalls. I want to teach them to stay in Reinforcement Zone when we're going for walks. I've got a list of things. What is your domino? What is the big one where you're at right now? And if you're interested in me giving you a list of some of the suggestions of things you might want to train with that new puppy, just come on over to YouTube and leave me a comment and or go to our Shaped by Dog website and leave me a comment there. Maybe I'll include that in a future episode.

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So, what is the list of behaviors? So, if you're on one of our classes of course we're going to give you a bunch of lesson plans that is going to give you all of those things right there. "I know I am in Blueprint classroom number two and here's all the skills that I'm having to train".

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So, what is the behaviors that you have to train? What is the domino? The one that's most important. What is the one that's most fun? And if you have a little extra time, what is something that you are also going to introduce or brush up on? So, go to your list of behaviors you want to train and what are you going to zoom in on?

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But remember, keep one fun and lighthearted for the dog. One that's new, the most important for you. Number four, you're going to review your notes from a previous session because that's going to give you great insight into this session. "What's, what's that? You don't have notes from a previous session? Sheesh".

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Well let me tell you, if you journal your training, it's going to be the absolute best way to improve. Otherwise, we're humans. We tend to repeat our mistakes. So, when you review your journal, it could be as rudimentary as you want. The date, what you trained and on a scale of 1 to 10, how great was it? And the next thing would be what you want to improve.

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So, you're going to go to that even if it's a rudimentary record keep and say, "Oh man, I remember that now. I gave myself a three on the hand touches so I'm going to bring hand touches into my next training session." So, review your training notes. That's checkbox number four. You may or may not be bringing something into this next training session. Now, number five. What does success look like? You know when you're finished this session, you look back and you go "This was his success because..." Write that down because that is your goal of this session.



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You have to have targets in order to get success and move forward. If you're just going aimlessly, "I'm just going to teach my dog I don't know, how to sit or roll over? I don't know. And then we'll see how that goes." That's not bringing any energy to a session and that's not bringing any confidence to a session.

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And so, when you have a goal, and you have a plan the sessions I tell you will take you a lot less time to train whatever it is that you want to train. So, make sure you've got that goal. Check box number six. This is a biggie. What is the equipment that is required? Now when I say what equipment you're going to need, you're going to think, "Oh yeah what treats do I have?"

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"I've got to have some lower value treats and some high value treats. I'm going to have a bunch of treats. My clicker got my clicker. Obviously, my journal now that Susan's kicked my butt, I'll have my journal and my pen. So, I got my treats and what about a toy? Yeah, just some toys and I guess that's it."

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What about a leash? You may want to practice something on a leash. At this stage of my puppy's training This! is 17 months old and I never really put a collar on her around the house, but I always have a collar hanged up in the building that I can put on for training because it's a great way to remind her of the collar grab game, building value for that. It's a great way to restrain her. I love training a dog with a collar on.

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So, leash and collar and you may or may not need the leash, but you've got to make sure that that's on your equipment checklist. What toy you're going to use to relationship build at the beginning and what toy you're going to use for your balance breaks or game. You may not have a dog who loves toys, but what game? And if you're not sure about balance breaks, I've got a video on YouTube all about [balance breaks](#).

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Now, things that you're not going to think so much about is number one, that journal and pen, thank you for the reminder. Number two, a video camera. Come on everyone's got a phone. A phone and you can get a cheap little tripod to put that phone on. I actually have several of them. So, you definitely want to, anytime you're training any mechanical skill you want to video your training. I want to hear from those of you if you love video you're training or "Susan, there's no way I would ever video my training." I would like to hear from you.

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Number seven, your warmup plan. So, you will have a list of things. I like to engage my dog's brain and get their body warmed up. Now, the body of warmup, depending on what you're going to do, it may just be a, you know, quick little walk around. If you're doing something that's more physical, it might be more demanding than that. Early on, or it could be early and often, I love introducing ItsYerChoice as part of the brain work. I always do this with puppies. I always do this with rescue dogs, and I do this with dogs who are you know, kind of pushy in their training.



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We'll start with a game of [ItsYerChoice](#) so that when I've got cookies in my hand and I'm going to deliver them that I don't get a dog who's impatient. I've warmed it up at first. Warmed up body, warmed up brain, write it in your notes, what's your plan? And it could be the same for most of your training sessions. It doesn't have to be that dramatically different. Although the body warmup will be dependent upon what it is that you're going to be training in the actual session.

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We're getting down to it. Number eight is what is the criteria of the behavior you're training? What are you going to accept? I'm going to say "good", or click. What does correct look like? You've got to know that before you start training it. So, if you're training something as simple as a sit, is it with the front feet splayed out? Is it the butt part up in the air? What does that sit look like? As something as simple as sit has got criteria, but also this is so important. Not only what does correct look like, what does incorrect look like? You better know that upfront because your dog will be offering you behaviors or may or may not be that you aren't going to want.

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Let's say you're shaping a sit and every time your dog sits, they bark at you. If you click and reward that, that's what we call a 'cheap behavior'. It's coming along for the ride. Anytime you say the word "sit" you are going to get sit and bark, kind of like a park and bark. The dog is going to just do it, because it's a cheap behavior.

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So, know you got a dog that tends to bark then I want to shape behaviors without that. Or if I'm teaching say, my dog to target their nose to something, a lot of dogs will bring their paw and their nose along that paw being the cheap behavior. Know what you don't want. Super important when you are training any behavior. Just have it in the back of your mind this is going to make it icky if I bring this along, I don't want it.

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And if we're doing something like agility it could be as simple as 'what's the dog's head position'. For example, when I'm training a Threadle, a fence behavior in dog agility, I don't want my dog to look at me. So that's something I'm really cognizant of when I'm training Threadles, that my dog's eyes don't come off their job onto me.

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Now, number nine, the ever important. You must know how you're going to manipulate your environment to create success for your dog. And if you aren't sure what I mean, go to [episode number 44](#) where I talked about stages of learning and how you change the environment to challenge the dog or set the dog up for success.

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And also check out podcast [episode number 6](#), an early on one where I talked about all about the art of manipulation. Success can be achieved so much faster if the environment doesn't present other distractions or other options for the dog, so they go, "Oh, there's a pail on the ground. Obviously, you want me to put my feet in that or put my paws on that or put my head in that."



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So, they'll be doing things with that pail, but if there's a pail and a ball and a pylon and a fence and another dog and some cookies, there's too many options. So, manipulating your environment so important when you're training. Number 10, review your training. Journal your successes.

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Look at your video and then put a plan of action. It could be rudimentary. Don't go crazy. You're not writing a book. Just what will I do differently next time? A checklist that's going to exponentially improve your dog training because you're just doing things in order.

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Like chaos isn't going to bring success the way structure and order will, and we're making it super easy for you. We're giving you a downloadable copy of this checklist you can have for yourself. Just check [the link in the show notes](#). And if you're watching this on YouTube, you'll find that link in the description.

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I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

Dog Training Plan Checklist:

[Get your Dog Training Session Planning Checklist PDF](#)

Resources:

[YouTube Video: 5 Game for Puppies](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 66: Resource Guarding: Dog vs Dog Aggression](#)

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

[YouTube Video: Dog Training with Balance Breaks Demo](#)

[Learn ItsYerChoice](#)

[Podcast Episode 44: Using Coincidences and Positive Associations in Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 6: The Art of Manipulation](#)



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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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- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
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