

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG How well does your dog respond to your cues from a distance? Like imagine if you're out walking in the woods and you find you're on one side of a path and the dogs on the other side of a path and a cyclist is coming by. You asked your dog to down or sit because if you called the dog they might get in the path of the cyclist. How likely is your dog going to respond to those cues when they're away from you? And wouldn't it be a value to have that kind of response?

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And today's episode is going to start a series where I'm going to help you get amazing responses from your dog from a distance. And it is going to be easier than you may think at first. But a dog responding from a distance is just showing mastery of skills that they can do really, really close up.

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And that is the challenge because too often success in dog training is evaluated by a dog who you've helped to learn a skill. So, they sort of kind of do it, but they maybe need a few helpful reminders. You might give them a cue with a word, and then you got to help them with your body. That's the level of success for most people; that's what they aspire to.

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And I think it's easy to want that from your pet because "Come on Susan, I got so much to do on a day. I got to go to work. I got the kids, I got the laundry, I got the plumber coming in the morning and I don't have time to train a dog." But with just a little bit of a mind shift, the way that I'm talking about training, the way that myself and all my students train dogs is just engaging.

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It's just a conversation. Like if you have a BFF, wouldn't you love to just have a quick little conversation with them. That's what dog training is to me. It's you have a response; they have a response. And its engagement means you both find value in that interaction. And if you both find value then yes, we all have massively busy lives but we're going to carve out 30 seconds for a little bit of interaction.

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And then, "Okay, I'm going to catch you after work because I've got to fly but it was great catching up." And then you get home after work and "Oh, I've got three minutes. I can do a little bit more interaction." And guess what, all of that [adds up over the course of a week](#) that you've put in 30 or 40, maybe even an hour of training with your dog.

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And I just - you know the word training it just grates on your nerves because so often it's triggered to mean, "Oh, it's work. It's drilling. It's things the dog kind of he doesn't really want to do, and I don't kind of really want to do that." We just need to change the vision of what educating a dog is. Because mastery is getting mastery of those skills. That's success in dog training.



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Mastery of those skills close up means you have a far better chance of getting mastery of those skills from a distance. So, in this first podcast, in this first episode we're going to help you get mastery at a distance. We're going to talk about mastery close up and what does that look like. And there's a few elements that you just need to be clear about. Three of them we need the dog to have clarity with and the fourth it's like a grouping, it's up to you.

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So, the first thing we really want our dog to understand are the cues, the verbal cues of the behaviors that we would love to see them to be able to master close up and at a distance. So, the obvious ones would be sit, down, and I would suggest one or two other cues. So, I use the cue stand, might be a little bit challenging, but I picked that because I'm going to put a link in the show notes for a quick and easy way to [teach your dog how to stand](#) the way that we teach our dogs how to stand. And already I've got a video on YouTube where I show you a [super easy way to teach your dog to down](#).

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And so, there's two of the three behaviors. If you'd like to know how I teach my sit, you can just jump over to YouTube and leave me a comment. And I can do a video on that as well. But I assume most people have a grasp on that one. Okay. So, what we need a dog will respond the first time we asked. We don't have to re-cue. We don't have to do "sit, sit, sit".

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We don't have to go "sit" and then get towering over the dog. We don't have to use a food lure or our pretend lure that you pretend you've got something and you're putting it over your dog's head. The dog hears a cue, boom they go, "Yeah, I know what that means. I'm going to do that." Okay so we got to clean that up today. Right. That's the first thing.

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So, we have a dog who understands what the verbal cues mean and they're excited to do it. The second thing is they will hold that position. There is no longer "sit, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay". Because [the stay days has gone](#). A cue means go into that position. And there is no time set for that. It is going that to position until, number three element, I give you a release cue. So, our dog's responsibility that we are going to help them achieve mastery at is respond to my cue.

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And that goes back to you guys. You have to train it in an engaging way where you have the, I've talked about the [5Cs of training](#) where you have that connection. You create clarity for what you want, the sit, down or the stand. Then you build confidence. And then we throw challenge. And guess what, one challenge could be working at a distance. But that is a university challenge. We've got to get the little challenges close up first.

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Okay. So, we've worked with the 5Cs on sit, down, stand or whatever behaviors you think would be helpful from a distance. Obviously, a recall would be helpful from a distance, but we're not focusing on that. We want our dog to be at a distance and do these behaviors. That's what our ultimate goal is. Okay. Because it's life saving, it's actually life saving. So, let's talk about the release cue. I have many and you probably do too, but you might not be intentional about them. So, let's clean that up.



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If I say to my dog “break”, it means they can leave that position and find reinforcement in wherever they find, ideally towards me, but it may not be because I've said break. If I said their name, it would mean come to me. So, break is one. “Search” means find the food I've thrown and “get it” means go to the dead retrieve.

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So, I might have like a bowl with, I've put a cookie in and if they're in a sit and I say get it, they can get out of the sit and get the food out of the bowl. If I say search and I've got food in the bowl, they get the cookies that I've thrown on the floor. They don't take the ones out of the bowl. Okay. So, another skill that your dogs have to have, strongly encourage, it is the skill of [ItsYerChoice](#).

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I'll put a [link](#) in the show notes. So, I will give you the step by step to how you can play that with your dog. And that is the foundation that all of my training is built on. So, but the three main ones that we need for teaching the foundations for getting away at a distance is getting that mastery up close. Response to a cue, hold position until you release, and the understanding of a release word.

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So that holding position includes with distractions. So, the distraction of the bicycle going by. The distraction of, you know, you might be walking into another room, and you come back, and we want our dog to hold that position. So those are the three things that our dogs are really going to need to have mastery with. And I think ItsYerChoice is the way to help get your dog mastery with the second one in particular.

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Now I said there was one you're responsible for, and that is [training mechanics](#). And that is number one, having an awareness. It's funny that I should say that so I'm just going to throw it out here. I was at an Eckart Tolle lecture last night. It was amazing. And so being present to know what's going on is helpful at everything in life but in particular when you're working at educating your dog, when you're creating this kind of engagement. And what do I mean by that?

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If I ask my dog to sit, am I leaning forward? Am I stamping my foot? Am I reaching to my pocket before I say sit? Really, really important that you understand that you're cueing without any extra help from your body. That's number one. Number two is that you are marking without motion from your body. So, if I asked my dog to down, they down, I'll mark it with a “good”. And then that tells the dog that's what I was looking for. I may now go in and reinforce.

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So, it's cue, mark and reinforce. Be aware of what you are doing when you are cuing, marking and reinforcing.

And the next thing you need to be aware of is what is your dog doing when you deliver that reinforcement? So, if I go in to feed my dog and they get up out of the down that I've asked them to go in, even if they lift their elbows off of the ground, what did you just reinforce? You reinforced the dog for leaving the down, not staying in the down.



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Likewise, if you asked your dog to down, they down, you say good and then they get up and come to you for the cookie. You've reinforced them for leaving position. You've reinforced the dog on top of you, which we're trying to eventually build the distance from that. And the dog doesn't get a chance to show you that they can do a duration. Even if that duration is one second.

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So, we need you to be aware of your cueing, which your body is doing, marking. How are your marking? And you can use words other than good. I used to use the word "yes". Whatever you want. Saying things like "good boy", "good", that's praise rather than marking. You know a mark like good boy, it's building a long— a marker should be isolating a this is good, you lie down. Now if you wanted to praise or mark duration "good boy" is reinforcing them for staying in that down position.

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And then you've got to know what are you doing when you're releasing? Are you doing this: "Okay" and turning away from the dogs? So, for those of you who are listening to this podcast, are you motioning with your body when you give the cue? Okay, they can leave. We want the dog to not think part of what you're doing is important to what they're doing. That what you're doing with your body isn't built into the behavior, which is why so many people struggle getting their dogs to work at a distance.

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Because the reward is with you and if the dog's 40 feet away and you ask them to lie down, they are going to come close to you to lie down. Because "Well, if I'm out there and the cookies are over here then I was too far away. I can't do it. The bank's empty over here. The bank's full over here. I want to be lying down near the full bank." Okay. So super important that you get these mechanics correct. All right.

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So, lots of engagement in your training. For those of you who have got a dog who doesn't respond on the first time you asked them to down or they're really slow to get into that position, chances are it's not engaging for them. I would go back and retrain that and don't use your words right now.

A lot of people have been taught to use the words right away. So, you have a dog who was a little distracted and you're learning this in class, and somebody may have instructed you to repeat the word over and over again as a dog is doing the behavior. "Sit, sit, sit, sit, sit."

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Well, the dog is slow and distracted and that gets built into this cue. So, we want the dog to be fast and snappy and engaged and on their toes. And so that's what we want to rebuild. Go back and watch those videos on stand and down and I promise you you're going to have a snappy down and stand. And if you would like a snappy sit as well, leave me a comment and I'll tell you how you can go about to get that one.

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So, the goal is to know what does your dog's behaviors look like close up? And that really is dependent upon your engagement, the level of education that you've put in for the dog and the layers of buy-in that you have from the dog. What that comes to is what is the [transfer of value](#)?



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Like if the dog has always done behaviors with a cookie in front of them or looking like “If there's no cookie on you, I'm going to be slower.”, you're not going to have the same buy-in. We need the transfer of value. I've talked about transfer of value so many times on this podcast. So, we've got those behaviors close.

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I'm going to share with you now a little experiment I did with some of my students. This was probably 20 years ago.

I wanted to really make it super clear how behaviors from a distance happen because the behavior of the mastery of the behavior is close. So, this is what I did. We had a camp here where we had 48 students.

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They were divided into four groups of 12, and they worked with a different instructor every day. So, when they worked with me, they worked with half days. Okay. So, when they worked with me on the first day, I gave them this assignment. We're going to have a competition. Ooh. These are people at an agility camp, so they love a little competition.

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And I said, I've put this group, the whole camp of 48 campers, I've divided them up as equal as I could into groups of 12. So, if there's two Border Collies in this group, there's two Border Collies in this group. If there's a German Shepherd in this group, there's a German Shepherd in that group. And I balanced them all if there's many dogs in this group, there's many dogs in this group. And so, what we're going to do is between your group of 12 now we're going to divide you into six and you're going to have a partner.

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So, one member of the partner is going to be doing “behavior distance”. The other member of the partner is going to be doing “behavior distraction”. So, and your scores are going to add up and we're going to see who's the best team at the end of the weekend. Okay. So here was the exercise that I had them do. Back then, this is telling if anybody's listening to this and knows a little bit about the history of agility, there was something called a pause box way back when. And what it was, was a PVC square on the ground that the dogs had to jump into and lie down.

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There used to be a pause table. The pause box quickly went away, and the pause table is all that we saw. And now we rarely see a pause table. So here was the game, the team of team distance, what they had to do is to see how far away they could get with their dog. They could practice over the four days or three days of camp. They could practice as often as they want.

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And we would practice when they would get to work with me. So, team distance, it was how far away we were going to measure on one cue you would tell your dog to go in that box. Now team distractions, what they had to do is stay as close as they wanted to that pause box with their dog. And they had to do how many different positions or behaviors could you do and tell your dog to go from outside the box and on one cue they'd pop in the box and go into a down.



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That was their game. And so, they would be doing jumping jacks. They'd be lying on their back. They'd be sitting cross-legged. They'd be turning away from the dog. They'd be— it was amazing the different things that these people came up with for team distraction. All right. So, they had to come up with the list and these lists were incredible.

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They were well over 20 different body positions or distractions that they could be doing and telling their dog “get in the box” and the dog had to get in the box and lie down. But they could stay as close to that box as they wanted. And most of them were within an arms distance away or closer. Okay. Now final day, the big competition. I had team distance go from each pair. They went first.

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Team distance would go— and they average dog could go 15 feet was the average and their dog would go on one cue, go into the box and lie down. So, 15 feet, that's about five meters. Okay. After that dog would go, I then said, “Team distraction, I want you to go half the distance that your partner went and get your dog to go in the box.”

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And they said, “No, no, no, no, no. We were team distraction. We never did any distance.” I said, “That's okay.” And so, they would, they followed instructions. They went half the distance and guess what, their dogs flew one cue into the box, lie down. And then I said, “All right, now I want you to go back to where your partner was.”

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One cue, boom, the dog flew into the box. Now I want you to go further. And for most of these dogs, and I said, “You just keep going back and how far will your dog go?” Those dogs who were on team distraction, they went faster, and they went further than their partners did, every single dog. Why was that? Because what I was really doing, was I was helping team distraction to value build for a position.

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What does it look like? “It's not attached to me, but it doesn't matter if I'm hovering over you, I'm doing all these crazy things because I'm team distraction.” That's what they thought. So many people especially in the sport of agility if we say get distance away, they do it way, way too fast. The dog never gets mastery.

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And so that's what I'd like for you. Dog training happens in layers. Like really good dog training happens in layers of education. We start at kindergarten, go through grade school, go through high school, university, masters, PhD, post-doc. And that's what team distraction was doing without knowing it. That's how I set them up.

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You just thought of 20 or 30 different ways to add value to a behavior for your dog so your dog, the engagement went up. It was so much fun. This is so easy. The 5Cs, there was connection at first, it was super clear what you wanted your dog to do. The confidence was skyrocketing over the weekend. The dogs could do all these challenges.





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And the last challenge we added was distance, and it was a surprise challenge. And low and behold, the dogs were amazing. And so that's what I want for you. Focus on [mastery close up](#) and the next time we get together I'm going to share with you how you can grow that distance. Okay.

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So, before I jump off, I'd like to thank from the bottom of my heart the outpouring of support from my last podcast and the well-wishes. I got to tell you, it's just a joy to serve the community that I have out here. The people who listen to my podcasts and on YouTube who've just sent beautiful notes and left beautiful comments after I shared my loss of Feature.

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So, sending big love right back at you guys. You're amazing people. And I just love that I am the one that gets to wake up and think of ways that I can help you.

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

Resources:

[Blog Post with Video: How to Train Your Dog to Stand on Cue](#)

[YouTube Video: Teach Your Dog To Down On Cue: Easy Shaping With A Bed](#)

[Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice](#)

[Podcast Episode 134: How To Teach A Dog Stay WITHOUT Luring, Collar Pops Or Using The Word "Stay"](#)

[Podcast Episode 21: The 5 Critical Dog Training Layers for Confidence with Anything](#)

[Podcast Episode 125: Why Isn't My Dog Learning What I'm Training?](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 135: Test Your Dog's Sit Stay Training](#)

[Blog Post with Video: Get Your Dog Training Done \(And Make Your Week Awesome\)](#)



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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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