

# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

00:00:00

SG There are two ways for dog trainers to work distractions with their dogs. Unfortunately, most dog training schools all over the world will only teach you one way. And that is get the dog into a control behavior and then introduce temptations, competing reinforcement, to see if he understands he needs to maintain that behavior.

00:00:23

So, distraction type number one, maintain behavior. That is not what we're talking about tonight, because here's the deal. There aren't too many bunnies out in the country that going to flag you down and go, "Hey, can you get your dog to go into a sit? Because I'm about to blow their mind with a level of distraction I'm going to show them." So, we need to work level two. And that's the topic of today's podcast.

00:01:02

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome back to Shaped by Dog. Today is installment number two of the series '[How to get your dog to listen at a distance](#)'. And today it's all about the critical timing of distractions. There's two reasons why a dog would listen at a distance. Reason number one is there's a consequence if they don't.

00:01:26

So, they have a history of knowing if you say something and they don't listen at a distance they will feel physically uncomfortable. Potentially there's an electric collar on them or there's a long line or you chase them down or there's going to be some level of discomfort all the way up to flat out pain if they don't listen to what you say.

00:01:52

Now, if you're a regular listener to this podcast you know that's not an option of something that I'm going to teach you. We're going to go to reason number two why a dog might listen at a distance. And that is because of the level of massive reinforcement and engagement and the history that that dog has of making good decisions around you and the lack of history of that dog making poor decisions around you.

00:02:21

Now before you start pumping the brakes and say, "Susan, you don't know. I've got a field bred dog and there is no cookie that can compete with them chasing a bird in the bush." I understand that entirely. And that's why I defer back to our [Recallers](#) students. You know, I started an online program called Recallers back in 2010.

00:02:46

Now just hold it a minute because I'm not trying to sell you something. You actually can't buy Recallers right now. I'm just going to share a little bit of history. Recallers since 2010, we've had students from more than a hundred countries all around the world, [everyday dog owners](#) just like you, more than 10,000 students have been through our program over that time.



# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

00:03:10

And they've come with every breed and every walk of life and every level of understanding of dog training or not. And over this period of now 12 years, here's what I've learned. We're different. What we do is very different, so different that I decided I'm going to do a podcast dedicated entirely why we're different and what we do works.

00:03:35

I can just tell you that it's a combination of me being a geek about science, wanting to be kind to my dogs, wanting to be congruent in the way I show up to the people in my life and having this competitiveness to want to excel at the highest level of the sport of dog agility. All of that makes an urgency to what we do here.

00:03:59

And so, yeah, we're science geeks. So, we figure out what can we do to increase the level of buy-in from every dog. And so, we do have dogs that will listen at a distance, but guess what, it doesn't happen overnight. And that's why in the first episode in this series I talked about the importance of your dog understanding salient cues that, pick three: sit, down, and stand are the ones that I recommend that you go back, and you get buy-in from the dog because of having immense value for them for doing those behaviors so that they do them with enthusiasm and focus for you and for their work.

00:04:43

The understanding of the cue, your understanding of the impact of the placement and the delivery of that reinforcement, how that can make or break a behavior for a dog. And then the dog's understanding of a release word. So, the cue, the reinforcement, and the release word. All of those things we really stressed in [the first episode of this](#) podcast. So, in the last episode I talked about picking three behaviors. I suggested the sit, down, stand. Creating amazing value for the dog to want to be part of this enthusiasm and focus for work because of the clarity that that dog got.

00:05:19

We talked [about the 5Cs](#) that were getting connection first, then building clarity and confidence, oozing with confidence on those three behaviors, but it was dependent upon your cueing and that the dog understood just a verbal cue separate from a physical cue. That you understood how your marking of the behavior and the placement, and the delivery of the reinforcement had a massive impact on whether the dog learn what you intended them to learn and how well that dog understood their release word.

00:05:52

So those four elements were critical. Talked about them in the last episode so if you haven't listened to that, please [go back and listen](#) to it. Because I also shared in that episode an experiment, I did with 48 students who had come to a workshop here. Yeah, they became the topics of this scientific experiment, and they were okay with it because it's not like I did anything unethical to them. Their big takeaway was they learned when you want a dog to listen at a distance you need to focus on getting immense value for as many distractions as you can close up.

00:06:32

Okay. So that takes us full circle to where we are today. And so, we've got the two types of distractions and guess what, they're both really, really important.



# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

00:06:43

The first is we need to teach our dogs to ignore any distractions while they're in a control position. So, you might go back and ask your dog to sit or stand or down and then work through them not moving when you bounce a ball or throw a cookie or run away or have somebody ring the doorbell or any other things that you could do when you're working on control behavior.

00:07:10

But then what do you do when the dog makes a mistake? What is your normal right now? Just think about it. When you're working on your dog, sit, holding a sit position. Are you going to say "Ah-ah, no!"? Are you going to say "Oops, try again."? Are you going to take them by the collar and gently pull them back? What are you going to do when the dog makes a mistake? That's where I love, love, love the results we get from our students who go through [Crate Games](#).

00:07:35

Crate Games is an online program, and it is well worth your investment of your time. Because here's what happens. My young puppies when I start playing Crate Games with them or rescue dogs when I bring in a rescue dog, they get to see 30 to 50 different types of distractions. I'm going to [give you a list](#). I'll put them in the show notes here. 30 to 50 different kinds of distractions. And if they make a mistake all that I do is I gently close the crate door. I don't like slam it in their face because I don't introduce high level distractions unless they've got clarity and confidence at the lower-level distractions.

00:08:16

All of our training if you don't know, everything that I do is in the form of a game. What does that do? We get buy-in. We get a dog that wants to keep going. Think about a lot of times in dog training people either, don't ever want the dog to fail, they prevent failure or when the dog does fail, they lose the dog. "Oh, they're so deflated." "Oh, I didn't get it right." But in the context of a game, here's what happens. We strategically build confidence and confidence until we introduce a distraction that possibly may be too much for the dog and they may fail.

00:08:55

Most of the time when I get failure it's intentional. I go, "Okay we had a lot of reinforcement." "Why Susan? Why would you intentionally make a dog fail?" Because I know the crate door is going to tell them that they are wrong. And if you've ever played a video game, video games are intentionally set up— so level one is super easy. Yeah, kids might get through level one.

00:09:18

They might get up to level two and then, "Oh, you made a mistake game over." Are they going to go "This is a stupid game, and I don't want to play it anymore."? No. They've had enough connection, clarity, and confidence that that failure makes them lean in a bit. They narrow their eyes. They go, "Come on. I got, I got this." "I know I can do it! I know I can do this one! I got it! I got it!"

00:09:42

Think of a little leaguer, right? They strike out. Does that mean— yeah, they might be frustrated but they want to try again. And that's what I see in my students that go through Crate Games, that go through Recallers, provided they are not trying to make the dog fail and fail and fail and fail. We create clarity and confidence. We get the dog up on their toes going, "Oh my gosh, what do you got for me? No, bring it on because I can do it."



# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

00:10:08

Like “You got me once, you're not getting me again. That's— come on! Come on!” That's when you can keep growing challenge. Now, what I see sometimes with Crate Games is people might bounce a tennis ball and the dog goes, “Oh!” and they closed the door “Yeah, you were wrong.” And then they open the door again and they bounce a tennis ball, and the dog might go, “Okay. Yeah. Yeah. I know. I shouldn't move.” And then they don't then go “Yeah! Good choice!” and give reinforcement for that choice.

00:10:34

They then go, “Oh, you didn't move for one. I'm going to go two.” “You didn't move for two. I'm going to go five.” And the dog goes to move again so then they got failure followed by failure. Crate door closes again, and now [the dog isn't quite as keen](#). And if you keep doing this you get a dog who will play your game but with a lifeless expression. “Oh yeah, I know. I shouldn't be—.” It no longer is an engagement level.

00:11:00

We need the engagement level. That's the success of our program is we get that dog buying in. Every time I challenge my dogs it's like they're saying, “Yeah. Oh yeah. I've seen that one. What else do you got for me? Come on. You can do better than that. This is great.” That's you know, that's my voice that I hear in my head based on the look on my dog's faces, the ears on the top of the head, the way they whip around and come back again.

00:11:28

All right. So, I've introduced so many distractions in the crate that when I get them outside and they make a wrong choice, all that I have to do is control the distraction. I don't have to try to control the dog. Crate Games has taught them “Oh yeah. It was wrong. I'll go back and position. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.”

00:11:51

The very most I would have to do is just say, “What were you doing?” And they would, “Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.” Control the distraction. And that's something we can do. So, we go from all of the distractions in Crate Games. We get them outside of the crate. You might do it on a dog bed. You might do it on a Hot Zone. You might do it you know in a place where the dog feels comfortable introducing these different levels of distractions.

00:12:16

Outside of the crate, I would suggest you have the dog on a leash and again keep them engaged. Short sessions, leave them wanting more. If your dog starts showing signs of stress, go back to our episode [podcast number four](#), where I'm talking about TEMP: T.E.M.P. The dog's going to show you if they're looking away, they're lip licking, they're going, “Yeah. I'm not really—.” You know, it's not like they show one sign of stress “Oh my gosh, we got to stop.”

00:12:44

But your dog will tell you if they're really into this game. Right. If they're not looking at you, like you're their favorite video game then you've gone too far. Okay. So, we've got our dog in a sit, or a down, or stand. And I want you to work through all of those [levels of distraction that are easy](#) for the dog.



# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

00:13:06

Move to different rooms in your house. Move outside. Move to the backyard. Record keep guys, you've got to have 80% success on this. Now you might have a session where the dog fails a lot. Go back to the drawing board and go "Well did I change too many things at once?" Some dogs will just get a hundred percent deflated if you make them fail too much. Other dogs will start spinning out of control. They'll start maybe barking at you. They may, you know, [get frenzied](#).

00:13:33

We want our dogs to be buying in, but we don't want them spinning up. Okay. Short sessions, three to five distractions, release them. I do that in Crate Games. I might do, especially early on I'll do like one or two distractions, release them. I play another engagement game at the end of the release and then we go back and retry it again.

00:13:56

I want you to practice this. Different positions, different rooms around the house and then next week I'm going to come back with part three where I teach you how to transition from the stationary time a behavior to the important one, I mean they're both important, but we need our dogs before they can listen at a distance, we need to get them involved in another competing behavior and get them to listen then. Because that's what's going to happen in real life. And we can't do it from a distance unless we get a closeup.

00:14:37

There's so many behaviors that people go— they immediately think that they're going to try it at a distance. Like a recall. We get a puppy, they get 20 feet away from us and we start "Come on, come on, come on, come on." We start begging them to come. You need to practice that stuff closeup before you can expect it at a distance. And there's so many layers to put in before you should have the expectation that that puppy or dog is going to listen at a distance.

00:15:04

Do not try it at a distance. [Don't take your dog to the bunny farm](#) if we're just working this stuff at home right now. Alright. People get a new dog, or a puppy and they get them playing and they throw a toy for them to retrieve.

Why on earth are you working distance when you haven't worked close in. So many times, people don't think. What's the value for the dog doing this closeup? There hasn't been one established so why the heck are you expecting it far away?

00:15:39

Be on team distraction. Always be on team distraction which works super close. And that gives you team distance as a bonus, you don't have to work it. It just is there. And not only that team distraction gets behaviors that are faster, more engaged and the dog is far more focused.

00:16:02

If you just look at people in the sport of a dog agility, I can tell the ones who have been focused on working distance work because their dogs often are looking back at their shoulder when they're trying to get them to go out and do something, the dog slows down and looks like "Really, do I have to?" Team distraction will give you team distance. Okay. So, I want you to practice those three behaviors, simple distractions growing to more complex.



# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

00:16:26

But only do it in the three behaviors that we talked about and any or three behaviors that you picked, different rooms of your house. Inside, outside, do it with you sitting down, lying down. See if you can do it lying on the ground. Ask your dog or hold that position while somebody else walks in the room eating potato chips. Like add different layers of distraction, but we're doing it stationary - à la traditional dog training.

00:16:54

And then next week I'm going to give you some time to work on this. I'm going to come back, and we are then - because you've worked team distraction - we're going to go up to level two distractions. And that is, we want a dog to make a choice when they're in the midst of a different behavior. Control behavior. "Yeah. Okay. I can tolerate you bouncing balls in front of me." In the midst of engaging in a different behavior that probably has other reinforcement value and you want me to now stop engaging in that behavior and do something else.

That's a different game altogether. I'm going to teach you how to play that game next week. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

### PDF Download:

[List of Controllable Distraction Ideas for Confidence and Clarity](#)

### Resources:

[PDF Download: List of Controllable Distraction Ideas for Confidence and Clarity](#)

[Episode 147: Teach Your Dog To Listen Off Leash And Far Away](#)

[Recallers](#)

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

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

[Blog Post: Distraction Work in Dog Training: A Conversation Between Friends](#)

[Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 110: Is Your Over-Aroused Dog Just Over-Faced In Training?](#)

[Podcast Episode 24: Help for the Dog who Chases Chipmunks, Bicycles, and the Neighbor's Cat](#)



# Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions

### 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 over 100 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.



### Meet Us Online

- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
- Pinterest <https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/susangarrett>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs>

