

Off Leash Listening Skills For Dogs Part 3: Training Steps

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

SG If you spend any time on YouTube, you may have seen the [video of Fenton](#) in Richmond Park. That is where a, it looks like a Labrador Retriever is not listening to his owner call him nine times and in between he's calling for help from our Lord and Savior. And Fenton still doesn't listen, ending up chasing all of this wildlife in the park.

00:00:26

That is an extreme example of a dog who is not listening at a distance and today I'm going to help you make sure that never happens to you and your dog.

00:00:47

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. While getting a dog that recall off of livestock is a level - you know - 100 challenge - at working at a distance, it all begins with your dog just listening at a distance. Yes, there's a lot of games, that's where our [Recallers](#) program comes in that will help a dog like Fenton always listen when there's livestock in the area. But it starts with the dog just listening.

00:01:15

So, if you've been following along with this series, you'll remember that I shared that mastery is just [mastering the fundamentals](#). That we need the dog really understanding behaviors super close before we ever try them further away. And so, I suggested we pick three behaviors. I thought sit, down, and stand. I provided videos to teach two of those. I will give you an upcoming video on teaching the third as well.

00:01:39

And I asked you to just [practice those closeup](#). And here's what I observed because a lot of you posted videos on social media. Some of you nailed it. Amazing, amazing work. But some of you were helping and I bet it was unconscious help.

00:01:56

So, you would ask your dog to sit, and you would repeat the cue more than once or down and they wouldn't down, or maybe their elbows weren't quite down. And then you put your hands on your hip and you finger snap, and you point "down", you change the tone. All of that is not taking your dog's feedback. Your dog is saying there isn't enough value for me to lie down.

00:02:15

No, I'm not saying get a bigger meatball. I'm saying teach better understanding. So, the dog doesn't evaluate "What's in it for me?". The dog just boom, responds. That's what we want. That when the dog hears the cue boom, they just go into the position you asked. Right? So, practicing up nice and close and evaluating your mechanics.

00:02:36

I saw some of you who did things like asked your dog to sit and then you walked away saying stay or wait, and sometimes repeating it over and over again, that is helping. And it's [not really helping](#).



Off Leash Listening Skills For Dogs Part 3: Training Steps

00:02:48

It's probably just superstitious behavior on your part. Because my hallucination is your dog would be just as good or just as bad without that. If you did 100 of those sits that your dog would stay just as often or break just as often with or without you saying sit or stay. So, we want to get rid of that. And the worst thing that I saw people asked the dog to sit they'd walk away, the dog would, they'd might get like 10 feet away and the dog would stand, and they would turn back and repeat the cue sit.

00:03:21

And hey, great you got sit at a distance, but if you listen to podcast [episode number 151](#), where I was sharing about location specific reinforcement markers, you actually reinforced the dog for getting out of position by giving him a cue to go back into another position, hence creating a [behavior chain](#).

So, we want to not get too far ahead. We just want to work really, really good understanding closeup which means jumping jacks and you know, sitting down or lying on the floor and asking your dog to do these behavior cues: sit, down, and stand with your back turn. Or getting your dog on a stand and pretending to lure them to the down and say sit.

00:04:03

All kinds of things that tests if the dog is listening. Are they listening or they just guessing? Are they in their back brain or are they in their thinking brain? Because that's where we want our dogs to be. To be thoughtful, even when they're in a high state of arousal, because maybe they get excited about work or maybe you've got some really, really cool cookies.

00:04:25

So don't jump ahead with this really, it's such a valuable investment of your time. Sit on the floor and just practice these cues. Maybe just pick one for a week and then pick another one for a week. Really get your dog understanding and wanting to jump into those positions. Okay. A few other things that need to be in place.

[ItsYerChoice](#) - I gave you the link in the show notes, but I'm going to do it again in this episode. We want your dog to understand some location specific reinforcement markers. We want them to understand 'search' which means you can leave position to find food. We want them to understand how they can get food out of a bowl.

00:05:03

You can say 'bucket'. I like bucket. Or you can say 'get it' for out of a bowl and 'search' for on the floor. You can also use a toy. So, a dog that understands a specific, if they love toys let's use toys. Let's bring toys in because we want things that the dog wants. Okay. So those are the fundamentals. And remember we want to be on team distraction.

Team distraction is all about building understanding through all those layers of distractions that you can come up with to create clarity and confidence in your dog, [5Cs is what gets the job done](#). All right now I spoken, the second episode of the series that a lot of people spend time teaching dog to hold position from a distance while distractions are going on.

But that's not real life because real life is things like Fenton and Richmond Park with a herd of elk or whatever kind of wildlife they were. That we need a dog to listen when they are otherwise preoccupied, they're not holding position waiting for a distraction to happen upon them. And that's where we're heading today. But first what we need is we need a dog to be able to change positions at a distance.



Off Leash Listening Skills For Dogs Part 3: Training Steps

00:06:13

And so, we're going to work that up slowly. And it starts by getting your dog used to you being far away and you ask him for a position change. Now that far away might be one step away. If your dog is like most dogs, you leave them in a sit, a down, a stand and you asked for a position change with you one stride away, very likely that dog's going to creep towards you. Why? Because you represent the value. The value is over here, they are over there. They want to help you give them their reinforcement. They want to get close to the value.

00:06:51

So, here's where them understanding that the reinforcement will come to them. Super important. So, what we're going to do is something easy. You can put your dog in an ex-pen, you can put them behind a gate. You could even tether them with a leash, ideally to a harness so that you can get a distance away and they can't creep forward. Practice doing your three behaviors. Sit, go in and reinforce. Go back out at a stride or two. Down, go in and reinforce, go back out at a stride or two.

00:07:21

Eventually you can add to position changes, but we want the dog to be keen to do it and the dog to understand that the reinforcement comes to them. If your dog really understands search, then what you're going to do is the dog goes into the position, you say search and toss him the cookie. Now, ideally it got to be a good throw because if the dogs tethered, we don't want them lunging and getting caught up. And if the cookie bounces outside of the ex-pen, obviously you're going to have to go in and get that cookie.

00:07:47

This is level one, but here's that kick in the pants with this one. Most of the time with this exercise, what the dog is learning is not what you're teaching. And that happens sometimes in dog training. And that's when you get the V8 palm to the head, uh, instead of I could have had a V8. That's not what I thought I was teaching you. Because here's what happens. You think, look at me, I could get across the room now and he's in that ex-pen and he's doing all these position changes and aren't I amazing.

00:08:19

And then you take him out of that barrier, and you try it from the distance, and he does the same old creep towards reinforcement. Oh, what's going on? What you were teaching wasn't what the dog was learning. Because potentially what the dog was learning is get as close as you can to the barrier and do the position changes when you're close to the barrier.

So, there's a couple of things we can do here. We can gradually decrease the barrier. If you have a lower barrier, that's grand. I don't happen to have that. But maybe go out, get the little fencing from Home Depot that you can put around that the dog could easily step over, but it represents the barrier. Get all the way down to maybe just take your broom handle on the ground. That could be the barrier.

00:09:01

If you can do that, that's great. You can get at a distance. But if you can't here's a few other suggestions that work really well. Teach your dog a paw target. Now it just so happens I have a great video on YouTube that teaches the dogs. it's called [Perch Work \(Pivots and Spins\)](#). It's all about teaching the dog how to put their paws on a target and then you can grow their behaviors. You don't even have to get to that point. It's just getting the dog to put their paws on a target.



Off Leash Listening Skills For Dogs Part 3: Training Steps

00:09:27

You can use anything for a target, even a book, and you're going to get your dog with their paws on the target and you're going to start beside the dog, ask for position change. Gradually get further away. If the dog's paws come off the target, which they may in a down and that's okay. But if they are creeping forward, then you've got to go back in. We want them to understand you have to be in contact with this target for reinforcement to happen.

00:09:54

Throw the reinforcement back. We want the dog to get used to 'reinforcement will come to you; you don't have to come close to me because the reinforcement isn't coming from me anymore'. Okay. Another thing that you can do - you can do this with a paw target or without, you might need to start with - take your, a bowl and you can put a cookie in the bowl, put it down.

00:10:18

I would put it say in front of you and you can start near your dog, ask for a position change. And when the dog does it, you're going to give them their cue 'get it' or 'bucket' which tells them they can leave position and get that bowl. Eventually we want to get that bowl closer to the dog and you're going to get further away so they can do their position changes. Now they've got to have great ItsYerChoice for this to work.

00:10:42

And if you've got great ItsYerChoice it's never a challenge. They know they don't steal until they hear the cue 'bucket'. All right. Now, we want to transition from that to an empty bowl. And it's a promise of reinforcement to come. Get those position changes from a distance in your house. And when the dog does, you're going to say "search", toss it in the direction of the bucket but you know, or the bowl, it's going to bounce all over and that's okay.

00:11:11

Search is the permission for the dog to go and get it. Now you can do the same thing with a toy. If you have a dog that loves toys, do the exactly the same thing. The only challenge with that is you're going to do one position change, tell them "get it" or the name of your toy, or "bring me", or whatever it is. And eventually grow to two position changes. Go back to one and then three. It's a little easier with food, but you can do it in exactly the same way. Building ping pong in between one to three or five position changes before you give them the release of 'bucket' or 'get it' or 'search'.

00:11:44

Okay. All of this is happening inside the house. Now, if you're using your cue 'search' guys, I want you to be really, really intentional. Get the reinforcement behind the dog. I'm going to say that one more time. Where do we want it? Behind the dog. Why do we want it there? Because we're building value for reinforcement not happening in the direction of us.

00:12:12

We want the dog to listen at a distance, not creep towards us. So don't give them any reason to come anywhere near you. All the reinforcement is going to happen behind them. How do you going to throw a cookie from a long distance while they either bit use heavy cookies? Or maybe put the cookie in a [food toy](#) so that you can throw it back there and tell them they can rip it open and get the food toy or get the cookie out of the food toy.



Off Leash Listening Skills For Dogs Part 3: Training Steps

00:12:37

All right. All of this has happened in the house and now we need to transition to outside because the big distractions don't happen in the house. I like to do a gradual transition. So, if you have like a porch, a front porch, a back porch, that's a great place to start building that transition.

Then you go to the grass and then you move around to maybe the neighbor's grass. Maybe to a park. You want to build distance and get these position changes so that our dog always knows when I ask you to do something you just do it. Now we want to work to - remember the bunnies aren't going to wait with the dog in position - we need to get our dogs moving.

And so now you're going to be walking with your dog and ask for a position change and keep moving. Again, if the dog keeps moving, build in a target. Maybe ask them to stop near an empty bowl. Maybe ask them to start near a perch for their feet. And eventually you're going to get that quick response when you asked on a walk.

Now build that up even further. Ask a friend to maybe drag it a favorite toy, slowly, release the dog, and then ask for position change. If they go for the toy, the friend just gathers up the toy. Too much, too soon. Maybe go back to the dog's stationary, the toys just in front, ask for a few position change and then tell them they can get it.

00:14:00

You could do this with a flirt pole if you're by yourself. You could do this eventually working up to like throwing a favorite toy, a freezer, or tell them they can go for a swim and on the way there ask for a position change. All of this is challenging the dog but [remember the 5Cs](#). You're not going to jump to University because you're going to get too much failures and that's not what we want.

We want the dog to stay confident. We want the dog stay happy. We don't want the dog to become worried. And we absolutely don't want to get you in a frame of mind where you feel the need to raise your voice. It can happen. It will happen if you work through the strategic layers of learning that I've laid out for you in this program.

I'd love to get your feedback. If you're watching this on YouTube, please leave me a comment. Let me know how it went for you and your dog. I'll see you next time with you doing amazing distance work with your dog right here on Shaped by Dog.

ItsYerChoice Game:

[Learn how to play ItsYerChoice \(IYC\)](#)

Resources:

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

[Podcast Episode 148: Your Dog Listening At A Distance Part 2: Critical Timing Of Distractions](#)

[Podcast Episode 12: When Helping Your Dog is an Illusion](#)

[Podcast Episode 151: How Location Specific Reinforcement Markers Will Improve Your Dog Training!](#)

[Podcast Episode 42: Behavior Chains: Are You Teaching Your Dog to be Bad to be Good?](#)

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

[YouTube Video: Perch Work \(Pivots and Spins\)](#)

[Food Toy: Gamble Ball from 4MyMerles](#)



Off Leash Listening Skills For Dogs Part 3: Training Steps

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.



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>

