

## Conditioning In Dog Training: Why A Recall And Positive Interrupter Are Different

### Speaker Key

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### Transcript

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SG Today my friend you and I we are geeking out on dog training, on the science of dog training. And please do not turn away. I promise I'll make it entertaining. I promise I'll make it educational. And if you're watching this on YouTube, I promise my team is gonna blow your mind with how much fun the graphics will be.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And the content for today's podcast came from a listener who left a comment on YouTube in podcast [episode number 158](#), where I was talking about positive interrupters. And this was the common - and actually, there were two people who said, "Yeah, I'd like to know that too."

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This one came from Terry Griffin who said "This just seems like a new recall. I know the video starts with saying the recall is sacred, but there isn't any information that differentiates the behavior of stop and find mom. Why, why do we need two commands?" I'm glad you asked Terry because we're doing a whole podcast about it.

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Okay. It starts with the word unconditioned stimulus. All right. All right. "Now Susan, you're going into the science of it. Ugh." Remember Pavlov, that Russian dude who had the bell and he'd ring a bell and he'd present some food paste to the dog and then the dogs would salivate. Well, the bell at first was what they would call an unconditioned stimulus.

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Okay. So, this water jug it could be an unconditioned stimulus, but every time you saw me drink water, if you are watching this from YouTube, I started like throwing a hundred dollars bills around and said, "You know, if you can find these outside of these locations." You'd want to see me drink water because it meant I was gonna start giving away a hundred dollars. Or I might say "I'm giving it away to everybody who's watching on YouTube. You get a chance at winning a hundred dollars."

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This innate water jug would suddenly be no longer an unconditioned stimulus. It would be a conditioned stimulus because when you saw it you knew something good would happen. And so, you'd get excited about seeing it just like Pavlov's dogs. Okay. You guys know that you've been listening to this podcast long enough, you know about unconditioned stimulus.

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And in podcast [episode number 130](#), I talked about conditioning and how it's different than the actual dog training. Because conditioning is creating emotional or sometimes - hopefully not with anybody listening to this - you can create an aversive emotional response when you're conditioning. But mostly we're just conditioning really good, exciting things. All right. Let's talk about the difference now.



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So, we have things that I spoke about in [episode number 158](#), which were positive interrupters. So, I said the word “wit-wit” I start with puppies. That means just come running to me. I'm going to share with you that we have a new puppy in the house. And Kim and I who are kind of co-training, the new puppy's name is Belief, and we've decided that Belief's positive interrupter is going to be “ding-ding-ding-ding”. How much fun is that?

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Now we also have another positive interrupter which I forgot to mention in podcast episode 158. When I'm out walking the wit-wit came from the cue “with me”. I would say if my dogs were sniffing something I'd just say, “with me”. Or if there was a fork in the road and my dogs would go one way, I would go the other I would say, “we're going this way”. That is a conditioned cue for my dogs.

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Keep that phrase in mind. Conditioned cue, super important. Getting to that in a little bit of time. Okay. So, let's just go way back in our dog training. We have a clicker. A clicker is a conditioned reinforcer. It's a promise to the dog that you're going to get something. We're telling the dog when we click you are correct in what you just did, and you will be earning cash and prizes. No, our dog's not gonna get cash and prizes, but they are gonna get something awesome. Right.

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Because the clicker says, “you are right, and I will be reinforcing you”. The word “yes” for some of us who train or “good dog” or “good”, all of those things can be conditioned reinforcers. It tells the dog two things, “you are correct” and “you will get reinforced”. Conditioned reinforcer. Remember it's been conditioned. Likewise, they're in podcast [episode number 151](#), I spoke about location specific markers, things like the word “search” or “get it” or “tug”.

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Those are things that would tell my dog not only “you are correct”, it would tell my dog what they were getting and where they could get it. So, a little bit more specific than the click or the word yes. I didn't have anybody saying, “Well, why do I need both?” Truth is, you don't, it's just getting more specific. That's helping your dog understand things a little bit better.

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Okay. Now we have words like “come”, a recall word. “Front” for obedience, meaning come to my front or the dog's name, which for some of you - for me when I say my dog's name, I want them to come to me. All right. Now we have our positive interrupter. “But Susan, it means the same thing. It means come to me.” Yes, it does. But why wouldn't I use, just use my dog's name? You could, the short answer is you could.

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You could use your dog's name to mean stop doing that annoying thing and come to me. You could also use it for a recall. You could just say “come” when your dog is doing something you don't want them to. Why do I need to? I'll get you that just stick with me for a bit. All right. So, we've got these conditioned words, all these conditioned words in our dog's life. I want you to think of two things. Number one, what do you expect your dog to do when they hear those words? So, if you use a clicker, what do you expect your dog to do?



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“Well, I expect them to stop what they're doing and take a reward from me.” “What do you expect your dog to do?” is question number one. Think of all of the cues that you use in your dog training or in your dialogue with your dog. If you have words that you use, “get out of here!”, what do you expect your dog to do? That's question number one.

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Question number two, how close to 100% is the chance your dog will do it. So, is it 99% of the time when I click my dog is going to look at me expectantly and take a reinforcement? When you say the word come, if you use that word, what do you expect your dog to do? How close to a hundred percent of the time are they very likely to do it?

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Now here's what happens. If you haven't intentionally conditioned all of the words you use in your dialogue with your dog, that 100% starts taking a nosedive down into the crapper. Because your dog starts looking around at what else could I be doing? Because the words that he's saying 'get out of there' or 'come this way' has [never really been conditioned to mean anything](#). Right. Conditioned like something the dog loves.

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And so that's why sometimes when people call the dog and the dog doesn't come, they click the clicker. And you'll go, “Well, what's wrong with that? The dog comes then because they know that and I'll give them a reward you know, because I clicked my clicker. Because what does the clicker mean?”

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It means “what you're doing right now I absolutely love. and if you repeat that, there's a high probability I will click the clicker again.” So, when you are clicking the clicker, it's a conditioned reinforcer. It's telling the dog “I love what you're doing”. So, if your dog isn't coming when you asked them and then you click the clicker, you're actually telling them ‘It's good that you're not coming when I'm calling you’.

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Now I'm gonna say if you were in like in an emergency situation one time in your life you click the clicker because oh my gosh, you've got to save your dog's life. Have at it my friend, have at it. Let's save a life. But all of these conditioned responses, all of these conditioned reinforcers have a specific role.

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So, if I'm saying to my dogs when we're out for a walk “we're going this way”, I don't expect them to come running back to me. I expect them to alter their path, not go down that fork, but comb on this fork. When I'm walking with my dog and I say, “with me”, I mean stop sniffing what you're sniffing and go this way.

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Those things have been conditioned. The reinforcement for we're going this way is when my dogs are young, I intentionally hide on them. I intentionally let them think we're going down this fork and then I duck down the other one. And then I make a goofy noise. And the dogs go, “wait, where is she?” It's like in my mind you know, the dogs, you know two or three of the dogs go down the wrong fork.



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And it's like Keystone Cops, they hear that noise, and they look around and they don't see me. And like, they kind of run into each other. "Well, isn't she behind you? I thought she's behind you." "No. She's not behind me." "I thought she's behind you." "She's not behind you?" And then it's like game on.

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So, the reinforcement when I say 'we're going this way' is they get to chase me, that's the fun part. 'We're going this way' they learn, means that— I mean, my dogs like to be out ahead of me when we're at walking. So, they don't like it when they end up behind me. The reinforcement they get when they hear the cue 'we're going this way' is they get to turn and chase by me when we're out walking.

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Alright. So, I have intentionally used the environment to reinforce my dogs when they hear the cue 'we're going this way'.

Alright. So, think about all the words you use in dialogue with your dog. What do you expect them to do and what is the likelihood, how close to 100% is it that they will actually do it? Now, let's go back to positive interrupter.

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Why can't I use my dog's name? You can. And I actually have where when my dog is doing something and I don't like, I don't want them to do it I'll just call their name, which means stop what you're doing and come to me. However, that is my dog's recall cue and I like to keep it sacred. And so, the positive interrupter really is kind of a reminder to me.

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My dog is doing something I don't like, like a puppy who's about to potty on the carpet, "ding-ding-ding-ding-ding". And we rush out the door, but the 'ding-ding-ding-ding-ding' or the, what I used to say 'wit-wit-wit-wit' is a reminder to me that I didn't set up that situation well enough. If I have to use a positive interrupter, something went wrong in the planning of that situation.

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Which allowed either, I didn't set a timer for, right now our puppy is nine weeks old. Guess what, we have a timer going off every hour right now. Every hour, we get her up. We get her out to see if she wants to potty, reinforce her for going potty. Bring her back in. We don't give her a chance to make a mistake. She's out every hour.

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So, the positive interrupter, if my dogs are— I don't know what my— my dogs are perfect. Why would they do anything? Yes, they do hear positive interrupters. Maybe they're like wrestling and they're getting too carried away and I'm busy and I'm focused, ding-ding-ding. My dogs don't know 'ding-ding-ding'. They know 'wit-wit-wit'.

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Alright. So, they will then go, "Oh yeah. We're not supposed to do that. Okay. We'll come see you." I will reinforce them and then I will say alright. Maybe before I get down and do some deep work, I should go out and train the dogs. Train the dogs first should always happen first in my house because otherwise I will get no peace.



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Alright. So positive interrupter. Can you use your dog's name? Sure. But I like to keep my recall word as something sacred. So, I always with puppies, I would teach the word come as the emergency - hit this button only in the case of emergency. And I almost never use it in the dog's lifetime only in training to practice it.

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My dog's name is their recall word, unless I give them another behavior. So, I might say "Momentum sit" from a distance. And if you just hear "Momentum", it means get in here. Alright. What do you expect your dog to do? If I say your name, give me your attention. If I don't follow it up with another cue, come to me.

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What's the likelihood that your dog will do it? I like to think a hundred percent and if it isn't, I'm gonna go back and I'm going to condition a better response. Okay. So short answer to this podcast was you can. But the more specific you are in intentionally conditioning cues the more clarity you bring to your dog's life.

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Plus, guys it's just fun. It's just fun to condition more cues that you can use in specific times. I hope that makes sense. I hope that brings more clarity to you and I love your questions and comments. So, if you have them jump on over to YouTube and leave them for me on this video. And while you're there, hey why not subscribe. And please, if you like what you're hearing, give us a thumbs up on the video. See you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 158: Stop Your Dog's Unwanted Behaviors With This Positive Interrupter](#)

[Podcast Episode 130: Conditioned Responses: The Magic Every New Puppy \(And Dog\) Owner Must Know About](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 144: Teach Your Dog To Listen No Matter What... Even If You Think They Are Stubborn](#)



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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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