

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

SG If someone were to say to you, "I'm a reinforcement-based dog trainer," that actually could be a number of different things. And today I'm gonna go over the main differences between reinforcement-based dog training.

00:00:23

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped By Dog. And you may not realize that there's a lot of different ways somebody may train their dog if they are a [reinforcement-based dog trainer](#).

Now the first one that most people would think about is luring, where you put a food lure between your fingers and you lure the dog, but that is one of four or five, or maybe even six main ways that somebody could train their dog. And those five or six main ways are all very dramatically different. It's rare for somebody to use all five or six of them. Actually, I don't even know if it would be possible. Let's find out. Methodology number one, I just said it's luring.

00:01:07

And so there's a formula which is lure - behavior - reward. Meaning you get the dog luring with something they love. That's really important. You can't just say, "Oh, I'm just gonna pick a piece of food out of my pocket, my dog's gonna follow it." The [dog has to love it](#). Alright? So lure to get a behavior. If you wanted your dog to sit, you would put the cookie over their head.

And that would cause gravity to help the butt to want to go to the ground. And so you're going to get the dog in a sitting position, and that is the behavior part of the lure-behavior-reward. And then you deliver the food to the dog. Okay?

00:01:54

So, it's important to know it's not just food that you can use for luring. A lot of basic dog training is done by many, many people all over the world. Done with a lure of some sort. So, you could use a tennis ball. If your dog loves tennis balls, you could put the tennis ball up in the air or put the tennis ball on your hip if you wanted your dog to walk on a nice loose leash beside you.

There's a lot of different things you could use. In dog agility, a lot of people will put the dog's favorite toy at the bottom of a Dog Walk or a See-Saw or an A-Frame in training to get the dog to drive to it or in weave poles. All of those are the same thing, but just using something different that the dog loves.

00:02:37

Now, I personally virtually never use a lure in my training, and I honestly can't think of something that I can say, except for this. I would use a lure for this. Maybe "puppy stretches." That would be a good one where I would put a cookie on the puppy's nose, and I would put the cookie and touch it to their hip in order to get a nice stretch. That would be something I would use a food lure for because I'm not going to create a behavior. Oh, I actually have, but I generally don't create a behavior like that. My dog, Momentum, will hold her nose to her hip and that's a behavior that she knows. Okay. But 99.9% of my training is done without any kind of a lure.



Episode: #170

5 Popular Ways To Train Your Dog With Food

00:03:23

All right. So how do you train your dog, Susan? As I've mentioned in the past: I use food. I use toys. I use [everything that my dog loves](#) – activities. But I don't use it as a lure.

And I don't know if we're going to be able to get into the details of why I don't in this podcast episode, but I promise you, I've got one coming up, which will share the details of why I do not lure behaviors.

00:03:49

Part of it is my observation as a 30-year-professional teaching people. But a big part of it is the science behind how dogs learn and there's tons and tons of scientific papers that support why it's actually a great idea not to use food lures in your training.

Having said all that, let me just say: there are a lot of very successful dog trainers using food lures exclusively as their form of reinforcement-based dog training.

00:04:21

And I will get into the reasons why I don't, in an upcoming episode. Okay. So luring. I think the world knows about food luring. Now, before I leave food luring, I've just gotta mention I actually used food luring in my training way back in the Eighties. It was the first way I was introduced to dog training.

And I just wanna share, if you are somebody who uses food lures, it doesn't make you a bad person. But if you want success, you have got to have a plan of how you're going to fade the lure. Because that's when food lures – or any kind of lures – in training don't work... is when people don't get rid of the food lure because the behavior gets attached to the lure.

00:05:04

There is only one exception to that, and that is with some breeds that are so driven to do the work. They work despite being lured.

And I could give you many examples: a lot of Shelties in the sport of dog agility, they learn with food lures. But, they learn to be really, really fast because they love to run and chase their owner.

A lot of Schutzhund trainers use lures, but they're working with breeds like Malinois or German Shepherds that are so driven by the work that it's just insignificant that they use lures to start.

00:05:38

Number two on the reinforcement-based dog training. It comes by a number of different names: observational learning or social learning. Occasionally it's called modeling. But there's some question whether that's technically correct to call it modeling.

And that is, when a dog learns by watching either a person or another dog. So, if they see a dog do something like my puppy will learn to get up in a hot zone when watermelon is being thrown around because all the other dogs seem to be in the dog beds because they love watermelon.

00:06:11

So, puppies do learn both great things from other dogs and not-so-great things from other dogs. Now, there is a form of formal dog training called Do as I Do where the person actually models the behavior. Which is why some people call this modeling. They model the behavior for the dog. Like if they wanted the dog to turn, they would turn and then wait for the dog to offer the turn.



00:06:36

Or they would touch a foot target and wait for the dog to offer the foot target. Now the dog will have some understanding of behavior offering before this, but there are people who do that. Again, nothing that I have ever done in my training. There is another form of training that's growing in popularity.

00:06:57

And this one is interesting to me, although I would never use it as my main form of training. I would put it under observational or social learning, but I honestly really don't know if it belongs in a category all its own. You may, if you watch social media, you may be familiar with two popular dogs, [Stella the Kelpie](#) and [Bunny the Sheepadoodle](#).

00:07:17

Now it appears that these two dogs have learned to communicate with their owners through buttons. They have a board of buttons, all with different words on them, and the dogs actually appear to be making full sentences to communicate. Which I think is pretty mind blowing. And you know, the premise is that dogs start to understand English, which if you've ever said, "Do you wanna go for a walk?" to a dog or what I call "talking dirty" to my dog. When I use words that they understand like "swimming" or "seesaw" is one that Momentum knows – or any agility cues.

00:08:00

You've probably seen the social media posts where people say things like "cookies" and "grandma's house," etcetera. Okay. So, the premise that dogs understand English, they group the words in categories of activities or descriptors of that activity.

And so, they teach the dog through social learning. In that, when they are going to go outside with a puppy, they'll say, "We're gonna go outside," and the person will touch the button. And they'll say, "Do you wanna go outside?" And they'll use the word outside in different forms as they're going outside.

And eventually the puppy or the dog will offer to hit a button. Now I have taught my dogs to hit a button to go outside, but I haven't taught it through social learning. I've shaped the behavior. With my current puppy, just as an experiment, I did teach it through social learning and believe it or not, she is hitting that button only when we ask her, "Do you want to go outside?"

Okay. So that is kind of interesting and it's something that I've never done – social learning – but I am, as an experiment, doing it with Belief. But I am doing all the other training that I normally do with puppies as well. So that observational learning could be divided into the two different categories: the Do as I Do and then the social learning through hitting buttons.

00:09:16

The next category is capturing behavior. Now, if you're watching this on YouTube, you can see a picture behind me of my dog, Swagger, putting his paw on his mother's head. Now that is a captured behavior in that I actually taught one of my dogs the cue "pals," where she put her arm around another dog.

And it was just captured like that. Capturing a behavior means you wait until it happens. And then you just reinforce it. One of my favorite captured behaviors – and honestly – if I do want to shape my dog to put their arm around another dog, shaping is far faster than waiting for them to just magically offer it; capturing it.



00:09:55

So, capturing. One of the behaviors that I love to capture is when my dogs wake up first thing in the morning and they give that great big morning stretch.

And I bet I am not alone to say to my dog “big stretch.” And we all probably say it in that way, right? “That’s a big stretch. Oh, a big stretch.” And then you reinforce it. Now, just you saying “big stretch” actually reinforces it. But I often give my dogs cookies after they do that big stretch. You know, that they walk out the front end and then point their toes with the back end. That’s capturing a big stretch.

Now that’s different than what I do when I shape my dogs to stretch their rear paw and hold it out there. Very, very different. I think a morning stretch is really more authentic. Which is why it’s a behavior that I love, love, love to capture.

00:10:45

Why would you capture behaviors? Well, for the one reason that they might not offer them as authentically if you were to shape them. The other reason? It’s easy if you know your dog is gonna offer something like some dogs like to talk. Again, I spend too much time on social media, but have you heard those dogs that sound like they’re saying mama?

Right? French Bulldogs or Pugs. Tater Salad. My dog Feature, she used to – we’d say she was giving a “woo woo.” And she would sound like she was talking. That was captured. She did it. We reinforced it by talking back to her or laughing or giving her a big pat on the ribs. Sometimes giving her a cookie for it.

00:11:27

And so those are behaviors that are captured. Now, the downside of capturing behavior is if the dog doesn’t feel like giving it to you, there’s nothing you can do. So, if I’ve shaped a behavior, there’s a lot of foundational layers to it. So, if my dog doesn’t feel like giving it, then I just go back to some of the foundational layers, build that up again.

And so, it’s more, ‘yes, I will do it’ because I’ve been given all this value for these other layers. Something like stretching. If my dog doesn’t feel like stretching? We’re done. We’re done. So captured behaviors. It’s like, you know, capturing a picture. You’re just getting the end behavior. There’s no stages to get you to a place if you want to go back and fix it.

00:12:07

The next category is [shaping](#). But just like observational learning, I’m breaking shaping into two categories. So, there’s something called ‘free shaping,’ which is how I started way back in the Nineties shaping behavior. And there’s what we do – which I’ll get to in a second.

Free shaping is where you get yourself a clicker and a bowl of cookies. And you stand in a room, and you wait for your dog to do something. And maybe they like, you know, turn their head and you click and you feed that. And maybe they move towards the door, and you click, and you feed that. Now, obviously you’re gonna have an outcome in mind, but you’re waiting for the dog to do something.

It’s free. They’re just doing things. You might not have an outcome in mind when you’re free shaping. You might just go, “Hey, let’s just see what they want to offer.” And so, you just click and reward anything the dog does, and you see what happens. You can also free shape by putting a prop down and click and reward the puppy or the dog for interacting with that.



00:13:10

Sometimes I'll get a dog interested in shaping by putting a container - like a plastic container with holes in it - and a big meaty bone in there and click and rewarding the dog for just interacting with that thing. Right? It's a way of getting them to freely offer behaviors.

So free shaping is free. So, if somebody wanted to teach a dog, let's say, to retrieve something. They might put a ball down on the floor and they click the dog for looking at it and walking towards it.

00:13:40

There's a [video on my blog](#) that shows a great example of me free shaping a behavior way back in the Nineties. And then me shaping it the way I do now.

And the difference was – I believe – the one I did with my Border Collie, Stoni, way back when, it might have been in early 2000. I can't really recall, but it took three and a half minutes for her to get the behavior.

With my Border Collie, Encore (dogs very closely related) it took like three seconds to get the same behavior. Okay.

So free shaping to me: I don't do it. The only time I would do it is if I just wanted to click and reward a dog for doing whatever they felt like doing. Which, honestly, I used to do back in the Nineties. But I really don't anymore.

00:14:30

The reason why I don't free shape is because I believe number one: you build in a lot of cheap behaviors you might not want and that might be difficult to get rid of.

For example, if I wanted my dog to pick something up and they're getting frustrated and anxious, they'll start vocalizing. And then they pick something up and you get that vocalizing into the behavior. You get the anxiety built into the behavior.

So, I don't want the cheap behaviors like barking, or they might start, you know, digging their feet or whatever they're doing because they got rewarded for that before.

In the video clip that I spoke about on my blog, my dog Stoni jumps up and grabs a rope because it was reinforced before, when I was trying to get her to jump on a cooler.

00:15:12

So free shaping it's free. It's a lot less structured. What we do, I don't know that there's a name for it. I would call it layered shaping or efficient shaping, honestly, or intentional shaping. And what we do is we [manipulate the environment](#) so that the correct choice for the dog is the obvious choice.

And that's why I trained two Border Collies. Two brilliant Border Collies.

Two Border Collies – very, very closely related to each other – the same behavior. And it took like a hundred times less to do it the way I train now. The behavior was 'get your dog to jump on a cooler.' And I was standing across the room when I did it with Stoni.

If I was doing it today, I probably would take the lid off the cooler and put a cover on it. The dog would get up on that. I would take the cover off. The dog would get on the cover and then I'd put the cover on the cooler. So, I'd even break it into more layers.



00:16:11

What's the advantage of this? The more layers you put into a behavior; the more confidence that grows as the behavior grows. I've seen people who say, "Hey, I got a new See-Saw. And so, I wanna do agility with my dog. I've put my dog over it." They look like their nails gnarled and they're a little bit worried. Yeah, because there's no layers involved. I've got like, I don't know, 20 or 30 layers to how I teach a Seesaw.

00:16:33

Okay. So, with layered shaping. I think that's a good name. Did we just coin a phrase here on this podcast episode? Layered shaping.

There's so many layers that grow confidence leading to the final behavior. So, you get to the final behavior with a lot of confidence.

And the difference is if something gets a little bit sloppy, go back to any one of those layers and put more reinforcement in it. And then you've got brilliant behavior. Okay.

00:17:00

So, there you have it. Five categories. Probably six different methodologies of training a dog in a reinforcement-based program.

But as you can see, seven vastly different ways of training a dog. And our next episode, I'm gonna dig a little deeper into why I prefer layered shaping over the more traditional lured approach to reinforcement-based dog training.

00:17:28

If you have any questions, jump on over to YouTube and let me know. What is your approach to reinforcement-based dog training? And am I forgetting a methodology? I hope not. But it's possible. See you next time. Right here in Shaped By Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 94: How the Best Professional Dog Trainers Use Reinforcement](#)

[Podcast Episode 59: Why Your Treats Aren't Working for Your Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 2: Reinforcement](#)

[Stella the Kelpie \(Instagram\)](#)

[Bunny the Sheepadoodle \(Instagram\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 5: What is Shaping And How Can Dogs Shape Us](#)

[Blog with Video: Positive Dog Training and the Difference in Shaping](#)

[Podcast Episode 167: Reduce Your Dog's Stress And Anxiety In Training](#)



5 Popular Ways To Train Your Dog With Food

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

