

Training My New Puppy, What He Knows So Far: Susan Garrett's Plan And Puppy Schedule

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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My puppy turned four months old this week. And so, I thought what a better time than now to do a podcast sharing everything he knows and what I'm working on.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And spoiler alert for you, he knows nothing. But I'm going to share with you what he recognizes, what we're working on, and I'm going to give you insight into what a day in the life of Susan and Prophet looks like.

So, when I say "he knows nothing," it's really my definition of the word 'know.' And I really hope you will adopt this definition. So, if I say my dog knows something, then 99% of the time no matter where I am, no matter what's going on, if I ask him to do it, he will do it. He recognizes the cue that I've given him. He understands all the criteria involved with that behavior.

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So, to say a dog knows something, that's when you have the potential of leading yourself to a frustrating place where you have your hands on your hips and you stomp your foot and you say, "You know this!" My puppy likely recognizes 40 or more antecedent arrangements leading him to 40 or more different behaviors that we're working on together.

I'd be willing to bet he would recognize all of them depending upon the location on where I'm working with it and what other distractions are in his environment.

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So, by adopting the concept that your dog recognizes things, then it leaves the opportunity open for your dog at the park when you ask them to sit, if they don't sit, you're going to say, "Wow, I guess he doesn't recognize that cue in this environment." Instead of stomping your foot and saying, "You know this!"

If the dog knew it, he would do it, right? Dogs are always doing the best they can with the education we've given them in the environment that we've put them in. So, your dog may recognize things, but does he really know things?

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So, Prophet recognizes so many things. He's a fun puppy. My priorities for him are number one, to keep him safe. And number two, to help grow his confidence in all different environments and under all different distractions, to make sure he's happy and to make sure obviously that he's healthy. And ultimately that the things that I value become the things that he values.

For example, I know he's growing to value playing with me, learning from me, because the learning is coming to him in the form of a game, our Recaller games right now, some of our Handling 360 puppy games for dog agility. He loves our training sessions. He values the thing that I value, at least one of them, training with him. But he may also value [chasing after a rabbit](#), and that's something I don't want him to value. So, that really is all that [training a puppy](#) is, is helping to grow the list of things that you value, your priorities, and [the things a dog values](#) so that they become the same thing.



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And so, yes, I love [doing dog agility](#) with my dogs. That is a goal that I have for all my dogs, but it doesn't change the fact that if I never stepped inside of an agility ring again, the way I raise my puppies, the priorities I have for them, the things that I focus on wouldn't change.

So, those priorities start with number one, [name recognition](#). So, that I want that puppy to absolutely give me a head whip reaction when he hears his name, or if you're one of my dogs, if you hear your nickname. Because it's a given, you will have at least one or more nicknames. So, name recognition, which leads to a recall.

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I want my puppies to [come when they're called](#). I want my adult dogs to understand to come when they're called. I want a retrieve and I want them to have great value, great understanding of what it means to be in [Reinforcement Zone](#), which means walking on my side, walking beside my hip. It could be on a leash, it could be off leash, but I want there to be a great amount of value for walking in Reinforcement Zone.

Those are my big priorities when I have a puppy. And throughout that dog's entire life, those will always be a priority to me because I think those are the things that make a great family pet. That allows the dog to have an amazing life because you trust them, and [you can take them places](#) and they enjoy going places with you.

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Now yes, there are things like [cooperative care](#) is something that I will work on every day so that the dog has a say in [getting his nails trimmed](#) and me looking in his ears or checking his teeth. He's teething right now. Cooperative care is always something that I will be working on. As well as we have a puppy, we have to do socialization, habituation, generalization, ideally not desensitization, but it depends on the puppy that we have.

So, all of those things are included in the package of whatever else you want to teach your puppy that maybe is a sports specific skill doesn't come in at the expense of any of those top things. And the final priority for my dog would be growing white noise, which means that things that are a distraction and for Prophet, it's like the leaves blowing across the grass. His neck grows six inches and he's just so engaged with that. Things that are a distraction, I eventually want those to be white noise to him.

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Now, leaves going across the grass can quickly become white noise to a puppy as they age, but all distractions, I want them all to blend in to be white noise. Meaning my goal for that puppy is to have [environmental neutrality](#). Meaning I can take them places where there are high exciting things going on and he will [focus on me](#).

He will be able to function and do the things that I ask and not feel the need to leave me or to get so frustrated because he has to stay with me that he starts vocalizing or redirecting on me or on a leash. That's a goal that I have for my family pets.

So, before I get into what Prophet and I are actually working on, let me share a little bit about what a day in the life of Susan and Prophet looks like. So, generally I get up around five o'clock in the morning. Maybe a little bit before, maybe a little bit after, but Prophet stays [sleeping in his crate](#). He sleeps in a crate right beside my face. It's probably getting close to time that I put him on the floor in his crate, but I kind of like having the guy hanging out there.



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So, he's right at my face level on a nightstand in his crate. I get up at 5 AM. He sleeps in. He doesn't even budge when I get up. I go and do my morning routine, my meditation, my yadda, yadda, yadda. And he sleeps. I come and wake him up somewhere between 7 and 7:30 and we have a little bit of a cuddle because he is a snuggly little boy. We then [go outside for him to do his business](#).

Generally, first thing in the morning, he will both urinate and defecate. And I do have conditioned words for each of those activities. Actually, his breeder started with his urination cue. So, I've kind of stuck with that German cue. And then we come inside, and he has some free time romping around the house. He's just been in a crate all night. So, I will do what I have to do in the kitchen.

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He's usually playing with a toy by himself. Occasionally he might try to engage Swagger. It's rare that he gets anything out of Swagger. And that goes on until, I don't know, eight o'clock. It depends on the day. So, some days I work out at eight o'clock in the morning and other days I work out at 10 o'clock in the morning. So, when I go to work out, he goes in an ex-pen or if I'm going to go upstairs to do some work. So, somewhere between eight and nine, he will [go into his ex-pen](#).

In that ex-pen will be things for him to chew on, beds for him to sleep on. I will throw [enrichment like a puppy bomb](#) in there occasionally. Like again, remember I said in [podcast episode number 239](#), you want to be predictably unpredictable.

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So, there is never a schedule where this happens at every day at this time. I always give you a puppy bomb at this time. Sometimes he'll get a pizzle and a pizzle holder. Sometimes he'll get [a food puzzle](#) that he can work through. Sometimes he'll just go in there and play with the things that are in there. So, he's got chew things in there, nothing that he can really destuff. And of course, he's a Susan Garrett puppy, so he has lots of dog beds in there.

So, he stays in his ex-pen, and we deal with each puppy differently if they get distracted by all the things that are going on, we might move their ex-pen away from all the action. I like to have the puppy out in the middle of the action because that's how they learn to deal with all the noises and activity that goes on in the house.

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And so 9:30 he gets his breakfast. And that is almost always a training session. So, if I'm working out, I finish my workout. If I'm going to work out at 10, then I'll probably give him his breakfast at nine. And that training session probably lasts for 20 minutes. Now we are not training for 20 minutes straight. [We're playing games](#). For example, this morning training session was cutting his nails. So, that was the last ten minutes of it. And the first ten minutes was doing some [fitness exercises](#).

I'm always balancing anything that is more focus related to him with something that's action and fun with him. Because I don't want to bog down the puppy's brain with things that are just too heavy. Light playful tugging, a retrieve games, along with doing things that are, maybe [some target work](#) or [learning to sit or stand or down](#).

There's so many things that we're working on. Forty behaviors we're working on, along with, so far, seven [location specific reinforcement markers](#). So, tons of things that he's learning. After his breakfast, he goes back outside and has a little romp around, depending on the weather.



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Back inside, a little run around the kitchen, and then he's back in his ex-pen while I go about my morning routine. He sleeps most of the morning. And then at lunchtime, we go out. And lunchtime is generally his walk session. Now, I don't walk my puppies very much for two reasons. Number one, they don't need it. Number two, they haven't really learned to deal with all the distractions they might see on a big walk, especially if you're in the city.

But also, they're going to pull on leash and pulling on leash becomes a habit. And I don't want my puppies to have that habit. So, I try to avoid them ever [pulling on a leash](#). And so, what I do on my big walk that I do, and it's one kilometer around our field. That's like six-tenths of a mile for those of you who are not into kilometers. And what I do is I take his raw food that he's having for lunch, and I put it into a squeeze tube. It makes it super easy to work with his raw food while I'm walking, I can just give him a little squirt when he's in Reinforcement Zone.

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Now, the walk starts out on leash and of course, he's staying in Reinforcement Zone because we do this almost every day. And I mark it with a word "cook," which means stay where you're at and I will deliver reinforcement right to your mouth.

Now I do have a bait pouch with some other cookies on there so I can give faster reinforcement if there's something I need to do. But partway along that walk, I'll take him off leash and he can just explore. And when he comes back and chooses to find Reinforcement Zone, he gets more reinforcement.

So, that's how he gets his lunch. And then a little bit more time ripping around the house. And back into the ex-pen. Three days a week, maybe four, he goes offsite. So, we go to a different training class or two different training buildings that we go to just to get him that experience. I will take him into the city to do some experience with traffic or kids or things that we don't have out here in the country or a store, a pet store, a big box brand hardware store.

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I'll take him somewhere to get him away. And then he's back to sleeping. Remember, he slept most of the morning. He's sleeping most of the afternoon. Dinner time happens. Again, there's no real schedule between five and seven, usually for him. And again, dinner time is a little bit of a training session. Now, depending on my schedule, if my schedule doesn't permit it, he might get his food in [a Toppl](#) or several Toppls.

He might get his food in a training I use his raw food with bowls. So, I have a main bowl and a spoon. So, I might reinforce them with directly with a spoon. I might use it another bowl where I will slide it across the floor to him. Whatever, it depends on what we're working on. So, yes, I'm a raw feeder, but I don't think that's a problem for my training.

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There's some downside, like if you're a kibble feeder, you can just hand out kibble really quick when you're feeding. And yes, it's a little bit more involved if you're a raw feeder. But the advantage is nothing is as high value to my puppy, as his raw food. And so, I've got like an outrageously high value food that I use with him three times a day, which is amazing.

So, some nights of the week, we will go to the building after dinner and do a training session where he might work on [watching me train another dog](#) and being calm.



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We might do some recall work, generally in the building it's a lot of action. And in the house, it's less action. I also, if the weather's permitting, we're going to do that sort of work outside as well. So, bedtime for both of us is generally around 9 or 9:30 and he will get a little bit more free time to run around in my bedroom as I'm doing my evening routine. And then he's back in his crate and that's it until the next day.

Okay, the training. Probably, the most important thing, and I know I've said this so many different ways, is creating an environment of success. And we've talked about manipulating the environment so that the puppy can [make the correct choice](#). We don't want to like [take the puppy to a bunny farm](#) and try to get him to focus on you because there's too much environmental stimulation that you're going to lose that puppy to. So, manipulating the environment aka creating environmental success starts with a place at home.

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When I have a really young puppy, I do a lot of training in my bathroom because it's a really boring environment with very few distractions. Unlike a bunny farm. And as my puppy starts to gain more focus on me, why would he gain more focus on me? Because the toilet brush is pretty boring and that's all that's in there, other than me, is a toilet brush. I actually put that on the sink because invariably a puppy will find it.

There's just nothing else in that room for the puppy. And so, I become their focus. And it's easy to introduce little inoculations of distractions by you being the number one focus. And you're playing strategic games that are layered in a way that the puppy absolutely has success.

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That's how our Home School the Dog program is, that's how our Recallers program is, that's how our Handling 360 program is for agility. It's strategic layers that creates success by helping you to manipulate the environment for your puppy or your dog. So, we have the bathroom. Then I encourage all my students have a little training den somewhere in their home.

I really have three main locations that I train my puppy around here. Sometimes it's up in the office, sometimes it's in my bedroom, and sometimes it's in the lowest level of the house where I have a little training den that all of my dogs can get trained down there. Now, when I go away from home, if I'm going to a class, I'm hoping that the teacher has set up an environment for success.

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The puppy class that I'm going to with Prophet right now isn't actually a puppy class. I mean, Prophet is by far the youngest puppy. And so, I have a penned-in area, quite a large area, where props and equipment get moved in, and I have the freedom to choose when I want to do things and what I want to do with him in this big, ex-penned-in area. While the older puppies are doing exciting agility movement.

And so, I will take more exciting motion games like tugging or retrieving inside my little gate when I know those other dogs are really going to be doing some fun things. And when they're working on things that are not as actions filled, then I'll do things that will give him more focus.

So, it's our goal to environmental neutrality everywhere. I don't give him the tough choice of "Do you want to run to the end of your leash and chase that other dog?" He's in a pen, he knows that's not an option. So, he focuses on me. Now, why does he focus on me?



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Because we've done so much rehearsals of that, in the bathroom, in the training den, in the quiet areas of my home, and little areas of the backyard, or the front yard, or the training building. So, that allows me to grow different environments, but only when the puppy chooses the correct choice, because that's how we come together as a team.

So, I've told you my training priorities and I told you I've got 40 antecedent arrangements that I know he would recognize. Some he is well on his way to knowing. For example, his name. His name, he is well on his way to knowing, the word "gassy-gassy" which is the cue that his breeder introduced, which means to potty on a leash or off a leash. He's well on his way to knowing those cues.

Does he know them? No, because I can't say that I can take him anywhere and 99% of the time he's going to do exactly what I ask. But those are the two that he absolutely knows the best. Possibly 'strike' his cue to grab his tug toy as well.

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So, I've given you the list of my priorities. I might be conditioning things that I want the dog to generalize. I might be [shaping](#). I might be targeting. I've taught my puppy to target my hand, to target my fist, to target my knee, to target his paws on pieces of wood, to target his paws on two by fours covered in wood to target his paws on pods, on little [silicone textured coasters](#). Those are great targets for dogs. I'll put a link in the show notes for those.

So, I've done a lot of, he'll target the side of his face, he'll target his chin, he'll target his paws, he'll target his nose. So, there's a lot of different behaviors that we've shaped using targeting, which allows me to build on other behaviors.

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So, our focus every day was cooperative care. We really are stretching that out because he pretty much let me cut his nails. We've been cutting his nails for three weeks just with him laying down, chill on his dog bed, not a problem. So, cooperative care, exercise.

So, exercise could be things in the house, or it could be like doing jump grids or cavalettis or things that are a little bit more activity based. Of course, restrained recalls. If I was going to group the activities as I started off with, it would be conditioning and shaping and targeting and fitness and verbal override games.

Meaning if I'm moving away and I ask you to sit, that you should sit. That could be potentially lifesaving. But for those of us that do agility, we want our dogs to be able to discriminate and do what we ask them to do, even if we're moving away.

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So, verbal overrides are important. Intentional focus, intentionally reinforcing my dog that creates focus for what's in front of you, for an obstacle, for my hip, for wherever it is that I think is important in your life with me. Intentional focus is another category that I build into my training plans every week.

And food puzzles that I use for enrichment with my puppies grow into something called the Vito game, which is a moving puzzle for my dog, where I introduce a lot of other things, I introduce targets in Vito game, I introduce a lot of other skills in that.

And for those of you who are in Agility Nation or Wag Nation, the Vito game is in those memberships, you can look it up. It is a great game for puppies.



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And I think that gives you a pretty good overview of what we're doing. One thing I want to make sure that I mention is that probably 80 to 90% of the time, and really closer to 90% of the time when I take Prophet out to go to the bathroom, he is on leash. He doesn't get to romp around the whole backyard. He is on leash. He urinates and he defecates on a leash. It's so important for you to be doing that.

We want our puppies to be able to pee anywhere we may take them throughout their lifetime. And you can say, "Oh, I'm a homebody. They're not going anywhere." Someday they're going to go somewhere and you're going to be that person walking up and down this little strip of grass in front of a motel asking your dog, "Please pee, it's raining, I just want to go to bed."

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If you've done this work and conditioned to do it on leash, I've mentioned that in [podcast episode number 48](#), your puppy will do it. So, Prophet's four months old. I know he'll urinate and defecate on leash, but I still do it. And I'll probably do it for quite a while yet because when they're off leash, then they get to play keep away, dig in the gardens, grab your flowers, do what they want.

When they're on leash, you're just building that trust, that foundation, that focus, that relationship with you. I hope all of this makes sense. Be sure to jump over to YouTube because I'm sure my team will put in some really good demonstrations of everything I talked about today. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.





Episode: #243

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Resources:

[Podcast Episode 24: Help for Dogs who Chase Chipmunks, Bicycles, and Neighbor's Cats \(Distraction Intensity Index\) #24](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Puppy Essentials with Susan Garrett Dog Training](#)

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

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Agility Training and Dog Sport Tips with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 13: Naming Your Puppy or Dog](#)

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

[YouTube Video: Understanding Your Dog's Reinforcement Zone \(RZ\) with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 180: Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Cooperative Care and Consent in Dog Training with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 107: Pedicure Please: 3 Steps To Dog Nail Trimming Or Grooming Success At Home!](#)

[Podcast Episode 184: Proofing Vs Generalizing In Dog Training To Grow Skills And Confidence](#)

[Podcast Episode 242: Help! Why Won't My Dog Pay Attention? \(Secrets Of Focus\)](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Crate Games and Crate Training for Puppies and Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 48: Potty Train Your Puppy in a Week \(Easy 3 Step Process\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 166: Puppy Freedom: How Much Is Too Much?](#)

[YouTube Video: DIY Puppy Bombs: Easy & Affordable Enrichment Toy for Puppies](#)

[Podcast Episode 239: Barking Dogs! How To Help Your Dog Be Quiet And Stop Annoying Barking](#)

[Nina Ottosson Food Puzzles](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Training Games with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 87: Canine Fitness: Why ALL Dogs Need It And 3 Easy Exercises To Start](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Target Training for Dog with Susan Garrett](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Sit, Down, Stand, Stay! Dog Training Duration Behaviors with Susan Garrett](#)

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

[YouTube Playlist: Loose Leash Walking with Susan Garrett](#)

[Toppl Dog Toy](#)

[Podcast Episode 181: Training Multiple Dogs To Wait Turns And Relax](#)

[Podcast Episode 6: The Art of Manipulation](#)

[Podcast Episode 171: Dog Training With Layered Shaping: Why Classical Conditioning Must Come First](#)

[Silicone Textured Coaster Targets](#)

[Podcast Episode 155: 10 Ways To Teach A Sit WITHOUT A Food Lure! Unreal Results For Puppies And Dogs Of All Ages](#)



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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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