

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Today I share answers to questions about how I feed my dogs. How do I engage with elderly dogs? Will I breed This!? Will I train in sheep herding? And am I going to teach online flyball training? And many, many more because today it's answers to Ask Me Anything.

00:00:28

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett, and I got to tell you, got a lot of questions from you all. Some of your questions I'll turn into full Shaped by Dog episodes. And I'm going to get through as many as I can in today's episode. Do more in the future.

More than 150 questions came in, in this go round. So, let's get started. See how many I can get through.

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"What age do you start training contacts in dog agility? When do you do full courses and what foundations do the puppies need to have?" Easy answer for foundation is all the great skills to be an amazing family pet.

That should be the number one foundation. Beyond that, yes, there's a lot of handling skills that we need to teach our dogs on the flat.

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My dogs don't see any real agility obstacles, you know, maybe a jump bump for their grids. They do some grids when they're puppies, but nothing serious until they're closer to a year old. My contact, I just do the targeting on a flat mat, or a raised mat when they're puppies or adolescent puppies.

And I don't really start growing that contact behavior until they're close to a year old or older, really. It really depends on the dog. So, a dog like This!, we really didn't progress very fast at all. 18 months, she had pretty much none of it. So, let the dog be the guide.

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"I'm curious how many hours you spend training Prophet each day?" This is from Mary Pedersen Miley. So, if you consider that if a puppy is awake, [they are being trained](#). So, the question is where's the training coming from?

So, there's formal training where I have got a planned session and I'm training a behavior or a series of behaviors, or conditioning something with a puppy that would amount to maybe 20 to 30 minutes a day with Prophet.

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Then there is just daily interactions, taking him out to go potty because we play [Crate Games](#) before he goes out. We play some Recallers games on the way to going out. So, that's informal training.

Of course, if he's playing with other dogs in the house, he's being trained by those other dogs. Is he being trained to completely ignore me or do I make a point of building in recalls into that play?



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I think you know the answer to that one. And even if I didn't do any of that, and I just like turned them loose in the backyard, which I don't because I don't have a fenced in backyard and I've never had a fenced in backyard because I don't believe in turning puppies loose in the backyard, because then the environment trains them. I'd rather I do the training than the environment doing the training.

So, formal training. You really don't need a lot of time. I think if you're somebody like me, I need less time than somebody who is new to this because I have so much more experience, but 20 to 30 minutes a day is all I can squeeze in into my busy day in formal training. But it's just the little, what I call [daily quickies](#) that make all the difference in the world for a puppy or any dog really.

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"Can you share the exact protocol you did for This! to get her out of her fear?" This comes in from Jack Goodman. Jack, if you go to [Shaped by Dog episode number 203 and 204](#), I go into great detail what I did with This!y.

From Ivy Hillard, *"Are there any disadvantages or severe downsides to having a dog trained in multiple sports? For example, ring sport, agility, obedience, and how can I work around the disadvantages?"* I think it's actually really, really good for dogs to cross train in multiple sports. The only downside is if behaviors get away from you.

So, there's going to be foundation behaviors. For example, if you did sheep herding and competition obedience, maybe you want your dog focusing so penetratingly on you for competition obedience, but sheep herding, we really want them to have the freedom to do a little bit of work and balancing the flock on their own.

So, there's got to be some freedom for the dog to work the flock as they see fit. So, it really depends how the sports that you're choosing balance one another. Are there skills that maybe if you're doing flyball and agility, maybe you need to do extra jump grids in agility depending on the dog. A dog like This!, flyball has been one of the best things for her and for her jumping.

So, depends on the dog and depends on the sports. But I think having a dog in more than one sport is so good for their brain. But also make sure that you don't turn into like a parent who has their kid enrolled in every single sport and the kid really gets a bit sour on all this activity and they really don't have joy for any of it.

If that's your guide, I think you're going to be fine. From Robin Lambert, *"What's on your secret Santa wish list?"* People tell me I'm a very, very difficult person to buy for and you know, anything natural probably is on mine. Maybe some vegan chocolate chip cookies. No, just kidding. I can't eat things like that anymore.

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"Do you plan on competing in the UKI US Open in 2024?" Yep. That's my plan right now. *"What would you identify as three to five natural abilities or qualities of any agility dog?"* So, of any agility dog Robin, or of the great ones? I personally think any dog you love that is physically sound can be a great agility dog.

Like you don't have to go through dog after dog to find the perfect one. I think all dogs, because of the nature of the sport of dog agility, it's just chasing your handler, your mom, or your dad, chasing them around and doing jumps and hoops, right? Like it's, it's a fun game. All dogs trained properly can be taught to, to really enjoy it.



So, if you're thinking of dogs that really excel, it would be dogs that have equal balance for food and toys, dogs that are playful in their nature. So those dogs, trained properly, they're going to love the game. They're going to love to play a game.

Obviously, if they have really nice structure that helps with the longevity in the sport. And I think you want a dog that has a lot of drive, but that they stay thoughtful in drive. So, there's a few characteristics of what makes great agility dogs.

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So, some of these came in from Instagram so I don't have people's names. I've got their handles, and I can't read this one, Sopeto320 *"How to teach my dog not to destroy toys? My dog, when left alone with a mascot, turns it inside out."*

Number one, when I see a puppy start to pluck at anything, a bed, a toy, I will remove that thing and throw in some [puppy bombs](#). So, in [Shaped by Dog episode number 232](#), I talked about predatory sequencing where some dogs just like to eviscerate and plucking toys, destroying toys that might be a form of evisceration.

And so, I give them puppy bombs because then they can shred the paper and eat the cookies. I will also just remove what they're plucking for a bone. And I do that often enough. My dogs just learn to shred appropriate things and not chew their toys.

But you have to be vigilant about that, and not leave a puppy alone with a toy that they might want to shred. Because I think that's potentially a hazard for them to choke on something or get a blockage.

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"If a dog is not actively training or lounging with you, do you always have them in a crate or a pen?"

This is from Hi Pretty Penny. No, my adult dogs are never crated or maybe other than in a car or maybe at a dog trial and event, they might be in a crate there.

But once they're no longer puppies, they just hang out in the house and do whatever they want to do. Now, my puppies will be in a crate when they're not being supervised by me, or most of the time they're [in an ex-pen](#). Occasionally they might be in a crate, like if I'm going out, I won't leave a puppy because I just think it's a little dangerous.

So, if I'm going out shopping, I might pop them in a crate. Prophet who is five and a half months old, he's in a pen if he's not being supervised.

But once they know not to go to the bathroom in the house, and I can, you know, close off the area so I can see if they're chewing on anything inappropriate.

My goal is to give them the freedom to be out so that they learn just to hang out in a bed and chew on a bone or, you know, not be a nuisance to other dogs. That's my goal. Once they get to that stage, they can be loose with all the dogs.

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This is from Beck Yoke. *"When to add the verbal cue? Is it right before they do the desired action or right when they do it?"* So, the correct answer is right before, but if you go to [episode number 113](#), I go into greater detail there on the exact timing and how to add a cue.

"Will you ever do public training again?" This one is from Cats Love Dog. Will I ever, and I assume like, will I ever teach a seminar? Sure, I do. I taught in Australia last year.



I love teaching live. I love teaching in person, but I can't help as many people when I teach in person. So, I love lecturing. I will be lecturing at [APDT in 2024](#). So, I will be teaching, that will be an in-person event, but most of the time I am teaching online.

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"Can you tell us a fun fact about Swagger?" Oh, I could tell you a million fun facts about Swagger. You know, he most often has a toy in his mouth, unless he's sleeping. I tell you what, he's got two favorite songs that he's had since he's a puppy. "Don't Stop Me Now by Queen." And if he hears either one of these songs, even if I'm watching like a basketball game and they play it at the stadium, he will grab his toy and start barking and bouncing up and down.

He's crazy about these two songs. "Don't Stop Me Now by Queen" and "Turn Down for What by Lil Jon and DJ Snake." So, he's obsessed with those two songs. Obsessed with them. I love music, but I play all kinds of music all the time. And those are the two songs that Swagger loves.

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This one's from bfbogez, *"I really don't have a burning question. I just want to thank you for what you do."* Thank you, that's super kind. I appreciate that feedback.

Another one from Danielle Verhoeven I'm sorry to butcher all these names. *"I just want to say that you are a lovely person. I appreciate all your efforts for dogs."* Thank you. Thank you for the kind words, guys. I appreciate that.

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This one's from C Latender 23, *"How does one get into the agility world?"* We have an online program, [Handling360](#). Anybody can join that and learn from the ground up how to have an amazing agility dog and have fun doing it.

"Do you use crates when traveling in a car? If so, what kind?" Yes, I do use two different kinds of crates. I use [Gunner Crates](#). I think Gunners are the absolute safest crates to have a dog in. I use that. It's the only crate I will fly a dog in. I also use [Ruff Land Crates](#) and they come in all kinds of really cool colors, but very, very safe for cars. Those are the only two crates that my dogs [travel in a car](#).

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From BananaBelle82, *"Do you feel equally connected to all of your dogs, past and present, or are some extra special?"* This is a great question because I think the correct answer is, oh, of course I do. Yeah, I feel connected to all of them, but that is not true. There are some dogs I just didn't feel as connected to. Loved all my dogs.

There hasn't been a single dog that I've owned that I haven't loved. But what I have learned, and keep in mind, I'm a very spiritual person. And what I have learned is just like people, there are some dogs that they don't need us as much. That they have their own way of going and they don't want constant attention from us.

So, the one dog that comes to my mind is Buzzy, the dog I wrote [Shaping Success](#) about. Amazing dog. He taught me so much. I absolutely loved that dog, but he was such a big character.

He didn't need anybody really. And he loved to work. And so, it was difficult to have as close a relationship with him as I did say to Stoni or Twister who were dogs I had around the same time. So, I think the way you worded it is great. Do I feel as connected? Because to say, "do you love your dog's equally?" Yeah, of course, you love all your dogs. I would hope.



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From Diana Marie Vallejo, *"How do you stop the zoomies in the agility ring?"* I think the zoomies are your dog communicating that they need more clarity in your handling. So, I would look at Handling360 to really get great understanding in how you've put the layers of learning together for your dog in the agility ring.

Now, if you say, "Susan, my handling is spot on, my dog's got amazing foundation" and you just get the odd zoomie, maybe you just overwhelm the dog with the environment that you put them in.

But what I see is in most cases, it's a communication problem because the dog is confused by the handling. And the lack of foundation of how to drive a path from obstacle to obstacle. Most people when they're training agility, they focus on the obstacles, reef pulls, contacts, jumps. They don't focus on the path that connects those obstacles. And that's when dogs get confused.

"How do you train your pups to bring toys to your hand?" I have a program called [Bring Me](#), and it is a free bonus that you will get in as a member of [Home School The Dog](#) or our [Recallers](#) programs.

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Smiling Bear 2000, *"Dealing with reactivity between dogs in the same household, usually after potty."* If you go to [Shaped by Dog, episode number 72](#), it's called Project Togetherness, and it's about creating harmony in your household. Now, if you have a serious problem, where, you know, these dogs do not like each other.

I seriously encourage you to look into the counseling of a Certified Veterinarian Behaviorist. And please not a dog trainer that calls himself a behaviorist. It could be a dog trainer, but that's got extensive accredited certifications in behavior. Important distinction, my friend.

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"What was the science or motivation to switch to once a day feeding?" Really, the motivation that got me looking into it was This!y's digestive problems. And the naturopath I was working with said her gut really could use an extended break during the day. And eventually we'd like her to get to once a day feeding.

There's lots of studies on this and there is equal, there's controversy about it as well. There was [the dog aging project](#). That's ongoing, there's two of them. One's a 30-year study actually on longevity and health and a great number of diseases and cancers that are decreased when feeding just once a day.

And just last year there was an article released entitled, "Once a day feeding is associated with better health in companion dogs." Again, putting results from the dog aging project.

So, there definitely is science to support going to once a day feeding, but do your homework. There are some breeds that maybe that's not going to work with. And I know a lot of people get upset and say, "Oh, my dog throws up if I don't feed them." Well, it could be what you're feeding them.

There could be so many other reasons. Don't jump to conclusions. And I'm just sharing with you what I do. That doesn't have to be what you do.

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"I love your agility programs. Do you plan on doing any flyball programs?" No, I'm having so much fun training This!y in flyball, but my friend Aaron Robbins, he does a great job, and he does have an [online flyball training program](#).



I believe Aaron is one of, if not the top flyball trainer in the entire world. He's got a great way with training people. He's got a great eye for dogs and his website is strivedogs.com. So, if you have an interest in learning flyball, that's the one person I strongly encourage you to learn from.

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From Kara Campbell, *"How can I exercise my dog while we are still learning loose leash walking and recalls?"* Two videos that are over on my YouTube channel. One is called [20 ways to exercise your dog](#) and one is called [15 ways to exercise your dog](#). I have no idea why those two have such similar titles. I think one is more about exercising the dog's mind.

Both are great programs. Whether you have an older dog and you're looking for ways to modify their exercise program, you have a dog that doesn't have a recall, just jump over to our YouTube channel, youtube.com/dogsthat, you'll find those videos for it. And I know we'll put the links in the show notes for you as well.

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Here's another great comment. And I'm just reading them because I just want to thank you guys for being so thoughtful and sharing your comments with me.

From Karen Moran, *"I can't think of a question at this moment, so I'll take this opportunity to thank you and your team very much. I'm blown away at how organized your online classes are, the responsiveness of your team, and the support of the community. I would never have thought online dog training could be what it is. Thank you."*

So, thank you, Karen. I just love the shoutouts to my team. I feel I am so blessed to work with such compassionate people that really not only feel the passion I do about dogs, they feel the same passion about people and their approach to questions, you know, are always based in kindness. So, I could go on about my team, but thank you for the shoutout to them.

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From Melanie Ditchfield Hensel, *"How do you make sure your elderly dogs still feel valued and loved?"* Well, I tell my dogs every day I love them. If you check out our blog post entitled [Big Adventure Time](#). And Big Adventure Time is a great way, it could take like actually literally seconds throughout the day to create value for older dogs. So, check that out.

From Kyla, Dawn, *"How do you decide where to start? There's so many behaviors I'd like to improve. I'm feeling really overwhelmed."* Kyla, if you go to my most recent podcast episode, [episode number 248](#), where I talk about creating milestones, it really is a way, you just focus on what you're doing today.

Because if we're feeling overwhelmed, one of two things happening, either we're looking back and saying, "Oh, my last dogs were so much better. And this is depressing me because this dog's got so many problems" or we're looking forward at all the work we have to do.

And it's easy to feel overwhelmed in that case. Look at what you can do today and celebrate that. And episode number 248 will help you make a plan for moving forward.

00:18:04

For Teresa Cooper, *"Who will you think you will mate This! with? Prophet when it's the right time?"* I think that would be an amazing coupling, but no, I don't believe I will ever breed This!. I absolutely love her. I would love to have a puppy from her.



But number one with the digestive problems that she has had and the endocrine problems that we've had to deal with as we work through her nutrition struggles. I just think that breeding her would add yet another stress to her body that she really doesn't need. So, I believe it would be really selfish of me to breed her.

But if I did, wow, wouldn't it be a lovely mating with her and Prophet. But as I said, not going to happen. So, nobody write in for puppies, please.

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From Heli R Jewel, *"How do you know when it's time to let go of a dog? Either age or sickness."* So, very sensitive topic and I believe I will do a podcast episode on this one. But I'll just say that I think you will know in your heart if you stay deeply connected to that dog as they go through an illness or as they go through [their geriatric stages](#) in life. And I always tell people, it's better to be a month too early than to be a day too late. That your dog will let you know if you're present for them.

And sometimes people end up hovering. And a lot of times I've heard stories that as soon as they leave the dog alone for a few hours, the dog will pass. And some dogs just, they hang on for their owners. And when their owners give them the space, then they pass on their own. My dogs, they just hang on and hang on and hang on.

So, I've always had to make that decision. Luckily, it's been, most of my dogs have been, well, all of my dogs have been teenagers. Most of them up between 16 and 18 years old. So, it's a tough decision to make, but to honor the great relationship I've had with the dogs, I truly believe it's better to be a month early than a day late.

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From Gailin Gaduri. Man, I am not doing good with names, but, move on. *"How do you deal with discouragement? If you had a previous job before, how did you make the big jump to the dog world job only?"* I did actually. I was in the pharmaceutical, Veterinary Pharmaceutical industry for 15 years or more. All different jobs, starting in research all the way up through sales and marketing.

So, the question is, "How do you deal with discouragement and how did I make that big jump?" For discouragement, it doesn't matter if it's discouragement at work or it's discouragement with a relationship or it's discouragement with somebody I meet. And I always go to [gratitude](#). And for me, every night writing down three to five things that I'm grateful for that day.

I mean, it just keeps me in perspective. I think it's a great practice. Everybody should do, you know, start tonight. Even if you don't want, "I don't have a journal. I can't do it tonight. I'll get a journal." No. How about just before you go to bed, sit on the side of your bed and say out loud three things that you're grateful for.

I think that is a great path to, you know, I'm not going to say never being discouraged because we are humans, but to have an easy calibration back to a balanced state in knowing that none of us are perfect. We're all going to be frustrated or discouraged, but our bounce back is, for me, is always going to a place of gratitude.

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So, a lot of questions. And I've only scratched the surface of the questions you guys sent in. Thank you for your questions. And we are going to do this again, because there's a lot of great questions I do want to answer. And some, as I said, will be episodes on their own. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.



Our Online Programs Referenced:

[Crate Games](#)

[Handling360](#)

[Recallers](#)

[Home School The Dog](#)

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 243: Training My New Puppy, What He Knows So Far: Susan Garrett's Plan and Puppy Schedule](#)

[Podcast Episode 190: Using Daily Quickies To Fast Track Your Dog Training And Grow Your Dog's Skills](#)

[Podcast Episode 203: Reactive, Unmotivated and Fearful: Finding Resiliency For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 1](#)

[Podcast Episode 204: Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 232: Canine Predatory Motor Sequence: Understand Your Dog's Prey Drive To Enrich Your Life Together](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 113: Your Dog's Verbal Cues And Hand Signals: How To Effectively Train Both](#)

[2024 APDT/CAPDT Educational Conference and Trade Show](#)

[Gunner Crates](#)

[Ruff Land Crates](#)

[Podcast Episode 164: The Danger Of Car Travel For Dogs: Evaluating Your Risk](#)

[Shaping Success by Susan Garrett](#)

['Bring Me' Training Program](#)

[Podcast Episode 72: Preventing Dog Aggression: Introducing Dogs or Puppies with Project Togetherness](#)

[The Dog Aging Project](#)

[Aaron Robbins Online Flyball Training Courses](#)

[Podcast Episode 32: 20 Easy Ways to Exercise Your Dog at Home](#)

[YouTube Video: 15 Ways To Exercise Your Dog](#)

[Blog Post: Rolling out a Big Adventure](#)

[Podcast Episode 248: Milestones That Transform Your Dog's Life! Goals To Achieve Dog Training Success](#)

[Podcast Episode 62: 12 Keys to Helping My Dogs Live a Long and Happy Life](#)

[Podcast Episode 208: Brilliance, Resilience And Gratitude: Inspiration And Motivation with Elliott Connie](#)



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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