

# Episode: #255

## Rescue Dog Training: Priorities For Your First Week Together

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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My goal for all puppies is when they go to [their very first home](#), that they're home for life. That they're going to live and grow and flourish and love and have abundance and the most amazing life ever. And eventually when their life comes to an end, they will have spent it surrounded by the love of a family or a person. The same person that they started life with.

But I get that sometimes that just doesn't work out. And so, this podcast episode is aimed to make sure when a dog's going to their next home, they are going to their forever home.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. I get there are a lot of [rescue dogs](#) out there. And bravo for those of you who are opening up your homes and providing love and, affection and attention to a dog who is going on their second or third or fourth or fifth or whatever time around.

Hopefully, with what I'm going to share with you today, regardless of what [struggles you've been facing with your dog](#), or what struggles you've been facing with your new rescue puppy, this episode is going to provide clarity.

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I'm going to give you some insight into [the emotions](#) of those rescue dogs, and I'm going to share what the priorities are when I bring a rescue dog into my home. Now, if you're listening to this saying, "I don't have a rescue dog, how could this be important?" I think that this episode is for everybody, because you can see the thought process I go through when evaluating all of my dogs, when evaluating my own training, and when deciding what the next step that I need to take with any dog.

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Now, this episode really was inspired by a comment that we got [on YouTube](#). And first of all, I want to acknowledge and raise the roof and give some hearts. If you're watching this on YouTube, please like this episode because we're liking this comment. The username is just a bunch of numbers, so I honestly can't even say who this is.

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But the comment is, "I just started watching episodes from your training style on YouTube, and I really enjoyed it." Thank you. "I would appreciate any advice from you. I foster dogs, and every dog comes in with different challenges." as rescue dogs do. "They all have different issues, but generally, all of them are [not potty trained](#), never lived inside, are [afraid to enter a car](#), don't know [how to play or what toys are](#), and some don't even know treats or how to take them.

Most of the time, dogs are with me between two weeks and a month before they get adopted. I try to train at least a little bit before they get to their new home. I usually take dogs who are longest in the shelter and they look like they're not going to make it out. So, a lot of [high-energy](#), big dog breeds.

I'm strict, loving, rule-oriented, and confident trainer. All of the dogs go out of my house like completely different dogs, but I feel like I can do more with your training approach. I would appreciate any advice on what would be the most important things to teach dogs in such a short time."



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Thank you for your comment, and thank you for being such a great advocate for dogs. And yes, what I'm going to share with you today will give you some great insight into the approach that I take.

Now, I'm going to cover five things for you today. The last two are forms of training and some specifics about what training I think needs to happen. But the first important thing is to take the mindset of [training the dog in front of you](#).

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Now, this is a toughie for a lot of people when they have a rescue dog because they don't train the dog in front of them. They train the dog they imagine to be in front of them. Meaning they know they have a rescue dog, and so, they create this story in their head based on the dog's responses. What they see, "Oh, he must have been beaten with a stick because as soon as I lifted up that stick, the dog flattened."

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And we don't know that history. And even if you think you know that history, that dog is in a completely different environment, and what you are seeing might not be related at all. Think about why dogs are relinquished to rescues, to begin with. Some may be street dogs. Now, those dogs tend to be very, [very fearful](#).

A lot of those dogs had zero [socialization as puppies](#). And so, there's a lot of that emotion is not tappable, but the transformation can be incredible with these street dogs. There are dogs who, unfortunately, yes, have been abused, have been tormented, and are just a shell of their former selves.

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And how lucky are they to have found you in your home? There are dogs who have been abandoned and either physically abandoned, meaning their owners just left, moved, and left them in the yard. Or they could be emotionally abandoned in that they've been living in this house but [not been given any attention](#) other than food and water.

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And eventually after a couple of years, the family grows tired of them. And finally, dogs are relinquished because they're just misunderstood. Because people imagine what the dog is thinking and they have such grotesquely overblown expectations of what a dog is, what a dog should come as, what should be factory installed, and what is a flaw.

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So, when I say train the dog in front of you, I mean take away the judgment. And take away the imagination of what you think has gone on and just observe the behavior. If you see fear, we've got to pump that dog's tires. We have to inject joy. If you see anxiety that's expressing itself in the form of hyperactivity, that the dog is just bounding everywhere, then that dog needs clarity. That dog needs confidence from you.

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Anxiety, presented two different ways. One with a dog cowering and one with a dog getting the zoomies and sprinting all over your home can still be representative of an [anxious dog](#). So, you need to train the dog in front of you. So important that you do that without judgment, without arms on your hips, without arms crossed in front of you, without wagging your grandmother's finger at that dog.



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All dogs need our patience as we grow that bond together. Because that's what training is about, growing a relationship together. And I'll get into more details later in this episode what that looks like. But just know that you can't help anybody, especially a dog, when you're judging them. You've got to let go of the judgment, see what you've got, and create a priority list for you and that dog moving forward.

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Number two, first priority on that list has got to be safety. You want to keep you, all of your family members, and the dog safe. Now, if you've adopted this dog from a rescue, you will get some form of a background, but it might be incomplete.

And it doesn't tell you how that dog is going to respond coming into your home. Maybe they're moving into a home that has [dogs and children](#). And if, just a heads up, you're not letting them, you know, all the dogs and children meet that dog in the first five seconds that they're in the home. More on that later.

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But you might have the dogs, you know, in another room, but the smell is different. You might have a home with a wooden or polished or linoleum floors, and they've never been in any environment with slippery floors. There's so many reasons why the dog is acting the way they are. So, number one thing we want to do is create safety in that you're going to be really cautious.

There's going to be no hugging and no kissing. Yes, there's going to be patience, and there's going to be, you know, reinforcement, and there's going to be nurturing. You don't want to put yourself in a place of potential mishap until you have developed that trust with the dog, and the dog can let you know their true feelings, and you can learn how to move forward with your relationship.

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Number three is you're going to [create an environment of great success](#). Meaning you don't want to be disappointed in your dog. You don't want the dog to have accidents in your house or cause any destruction in your house. You want to create the living environment inside that it's easy for the dog to be successful.

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That might start with a comfortable area for the dog to sleep in. You might initially start that off by bringing the dog into a small room and put a baby gate across the doorway. And that it's just you and that dog in that environment, maybe with a dog bed. And then you can start some of the conditioning training that I'm going to get to later on.

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Ideally, as I mentioned in [Shaped by Dog episode number 78](#), you will be taking one or two weeks off away from work so that the dog can come into an environment and you are going to be the constant there. You are going to be the one to help introduce the dog to that safe environment. You're going to start by conditioning a bond and the conditioning of the bond, you have to know what the dog likes.

Now, if it's a new environment, depending on the background that dog has come from, they may not want food or toys from you for the first 24 hours, and that's okay. You can just, you know, let them know I'm here when you need it.



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Imagine you're trying to create a relationship with somebody. And what would be the best way to create that relationship? Would it be to have demands of them? To tell them I don't like the way you're looking at me, I don't like the way you've combed your hair. No, the best way to create a relationship is, "Hey, why don't you come and have a seat? We can talk and get to know each other."

Now, that dog is going to talk by [the way they act](#). Let them sniff around the area. Maybe toss some really high-value food rewards on the floor for them. Just start with one or two. And if the dog is accepting to that, then now you've given them a nice place to sit, a dog bed. And while you're here, "Hey, can I order you a chocolate lava cake and a coffee?" Oh, well, now I can open up a little bit to you.

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Now, you can get a little insight into who I really am. So, that first 24 hours is about creating an environment where the dog can be comfortable, where the potential for confidence and joy to bloom is there because there's you and your non-judgmental self, and there's an environment where the dog can get reinforcement, can [earn reinforcement](#) from the environment, AKA you're just dropping cookies on the ground. And so now we've started the conditioning process.

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Now training any dog for me takes on the picture of conditioning behaviors and [shaping behaviors](#). And the goal of all training is to create an amazing bond between you and your dog, making it easier for that dog to bond with other people in your life.

At the same time, creating clarity for the dog about what they can expect from you. It's not "Here are my expectations all as your owner." It's here's what you can expect when you're living in your new home. This is what it's going to look like. Here's how meals are going to be prepared. There's going to be other pets in the environment, and you're going to get to meet those other pets later on.

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So, conditioning means we are adding something of value to the dog when they're near something that we would like to condition. Now, conditioning can take on the form of conditioning tools, conditioning places, and conditioning you. We want to create [value for different things](#). And so, in order to do that, we really need to know what that dog loves.

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So, what it can be food, It can be toys. It can be a chance to run around the backyard. What does the dog love? And then, you're going to start pairing what the dog loves with any one of those three groupings of items. So, I like to start off with words.

So, I've already mentioned the word search. By saying search and then dropping a cookie on the floor, we are conditioning the dog to when hear the word search, start looking on the floor for one of your really high-value cookies, and you might say, "Susan, why would I drop food on the floor? I don't want my dog to start eating things off the floor."

It's a really fundamental game because we want our dog to have [location-specific markers](#). Look here for this marker. And yes, there'll be times when we want to throw cookies on the floor. As a game that resets the dog in the middle of training, say we were training them to be in a spot eventually get in their crate, you could say search where they could burst out, grab the cookie, and drive back in.



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It looks like we're just letting the dog go grab cookies off the floor, but in fact, we're conditioning their driving back into the crate. So, having that cue is very valuable in your training as well conditioning the word cook. Now with a new rescue dog, I would say cook and present a piece of food on my open palm rather than trying to feed them between my fingers.

Now, as I know the dog and I know that they have a soft mouth, then maybe yes, you can deliver between your thumb and your finger, but no rush on that one. Feed out of the open palm. Remember, safety is number one priority. So, search, cook, and the third location specific marker that I'll use is chow, which means I'm pushing a bowl of food over to you, and you can have it.

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Sometimes, once my dog knows it's your choice, I will keep a couple of cookies in a bowl while we're training, and if something they do is amazing, I'll say chow, and they can run over and grab that food. Mostly, I'm going to use cook or search for my words. And then the final one that I would introduce my dog to is the word that I call strike, which means grab the toy, but you can just say tug. The word I used to use is just tug, grab the toy. Lots of fun.

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By having these words, you are creating [a dopamine hit](#) for your dog because they can anticipate something amazing is going to happen once they hear the word. So, creating clarity in the dog's life by helping them understand what is going to predict something amazing, what is going to predict that dopamine spike. Yes, I get it. They don't know about dopamine spikes, but that's what's happening.

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We now are one step closer to creating autonomy for that dog in their life. And what a great gift we can give dogs. So, after the location specific markers, then I'm going to want to condition tools, [a collar, and leash](#), a harness, a dog crate.

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A blanket on the floor. So, I might start by putting a blanket on the floor, and my dog looks at the blanket because, like, that's weird. Why'd you put that on the floor? I say the word search, put a cookie on there. And eventually that grows to be a target. I mentioned this exact process on my YouTube page, where I talk about [target training for dogs](#).

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So, I'm conditioning tools. I'll condition a harness the same way. I'll condition [a head halter, a muzzle](#). These are things you might need for your rescue dog. I'll condition it exactly the same way. So, conditioning tools, conditioning places like being in your crate, being on your bed, being in what I call [reinforcement zone](#), the area beside my hip in preparation for taking our rescue dog out for a walk, which I would encourage you other than your backyard, if you have the opportunity to not have that dog go very far from home where they have to face all the stresses of traffic and other dogs.

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Ideally, you're not going to do that until they're bonded a little bit more with you, at least a week or two. But hey, if you live in a condo or a high rise apartment and the only place that you can go potty is to go outside in the real world, you got to do what you've got to do. Just make sure that you're loaded up with [high value treats](#) so you can make it the most positive experience that you can.





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So, we've conditioned words, we've conditioned tools, we've conditioned places, and we need to condition you, which by the way, you delivering all of these food after you give your marker word is actually conditioning you as well. Likewise, things like scratching your dog, talking to them, engaging with them. Those are ways that you are helping to condition you as someone that they want to be around.

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Okay, now the training. We've done the shaping, we've done the conditioning. Now we want to do the training. So, what are the priorities for learning with my rescue dog? Safety always. So, I'd like to condition, [Crate Games](#) and [their name](#), call once game, condition the collar grab. So, anytime that I have to grab for them, they're going to go, "Oh yeah, this is a game, I get good things."

When we're conditioning tools, we've got the dog that we can grab their collar and they know a cookie is coming. The games are going to be about safety, confidence growing, and the skills that give us an amazing family pet.

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Those are the priorities. Now you're going to train the dog in front of you, evaluate what is the most important thing. Now you might have a 150 pound Great Dane. The important thing might be getting them out of your condo, conditioning them to love a head halter or a harness might be the biggest priority. so you can get them out for a long walk to make it easier, more at ease in relaxing in your apartment.

So, after safety, the confidence growing games and the games that make a dog a great family pet, they kind of morph into the same thing. Number one for me is ItsYerChoice. Now, if you go to the show notes of this podcast episode, I will give you access to the It's [ItsYerChoice Summit](#). And so, you can learn from me the step by step process and how to play it.

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Number two is the reinforcement zone. Conditioning the dog to want to be at your side, which leads to a dog that happily will [walk on a loose leash](#) when you're out in public. Number three, hot zone, which leads to Crate Games. And the fourth thing that I would encourage you to keep on that list for your rescue dog, you can find it in my YouTube video, [Perch Work Pivots and Spins](#).

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I love for you to teach that rescue dog perch work. It's a brain game that they love. It gets them engaging their body. Small increment of fitness, it's good for all dogs, but also it helps them to pivot when you're out for a walk, when you're turning into them and they can get their body around without being stepped on.

So, it's really a very, very functional game. Super important part of walking on a leash, but it also is a shaping game that allows you to continue to build that amazing bond with your new dog. Okay, there you have it. The priority list. and the exact games that I would love for you to train your rescue dog.

Many of these you can find on my YouTube channel. But if you really want to make a commitment to develop that relationship with your dog, and you'd love to say to your dog, "Hey, you are home for life and making that commitment. So, you and I, we're joining Susan Garrett's Home School The Dog program."



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Home School The Dog is a program that we have on our website. I think it's around 300, but because you're listening to this podcast right now, if you write to my team at [wag@dogsthat.com](mailto:wag@dogsthat.com) and say, 'My dog is home for life' in the subject line, then my team will know to send you a code that you can get our Home School The Dog program at the biggest discount that we've ever offered/

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And please, all of you join me in making a commitment to your dogs that they are home for life. That this home is their forever home. And I promise you, when you make the commitment to play these [daily training games](#), that will be the biggest thing you can do to make sure that happens. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Home School the Dog:

Write to us at [wag@dogsthat.com](mailto:wag@dogsthat.com) the subject line "My Dog is Home for Life" for a very special opportunity to join us in Home School The Dog

### Get Crate Games Online:

[Crate Games Online](#)

### Learn How To Play ItsYerChoice:

[ItsYerChoice Summit](#)

### Resources:

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

[YouTube Playlist: Helping Your Rescue Dog After Adoption: Success Strategies for Rehomed Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 227: My Foolproof Strategy To Overcoming Dog Training Challenges](#)

[YouTube Playlist: The Emotional State of Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[DogsThat YouTube Channel](#)

[Podcast Episode 254: Why Your Older Puppy Or Dog Is Not House Trained And What To Do About It](#)

[Podcast Episode 226: Safe Toys For Dogs And Why To Avoid Tennis Balls And Sticks](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Help for Over-Aroused, Over Excited, Hyper, Frantic, High Drive or Out of Control Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 183: What Does "Train The Dog In Front Of You" Really Mean?](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Fearful Dogs Help with Susan Garrett](#)

[YouTube Playlist: How to Socialize a Puppy with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 253: 7 Ways To Instantly Make Your Dog's Life Better](#)

[Podcast Episode 236: Understanding Dog Fear \(Part 1\): Genetics, Trauma, And Your Dog's Well-being](#)

[Podcast Episode 58: How to Create Kid Friendly Dogs and Dog Friendly Kids](#)





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[Podcast Episode 250: Expectations Vs Reality: Navigating The Path To Dog Training Success](#)

[Podcast Episode 78: How to Train a Rescue Dog with Behavior Problems](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Body Language, Communication Signals, and How to Read Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 205: The Hidden World Of Reinforcement For Dogs And Why You Need To Know](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 177: Dog Training Outside The Box: Transfer Of Value Case Study](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 174: Dopamine In Dog Training: Anticipation, Rewards, And The Transfer Of Value](#)

[YouTube Video: Puppy's First Training with Susan Garrett: Shaping, Targeting and Collar Conditioning](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 153: Dog Muzzles: Everything You Need To Know And How To Muzzle Train Dogs](#)

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

[Susan Garrett's Dog Training Blog Post: What's a Reward for Your Dog? List of Reinforcers](#)

[YouTube Video: Susan Garrett's 5 Games for Puppies](#)

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

[YouTube Video: Susan Garrett's Perch Work Dog Tricks \(Pivots and Spins\)](#)

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





### 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

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