

6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Do you have a dog who's really fussy about the type of treats that you give them? Then today is a great podcast for you because I'm going to show you how to get your dog grabbing treats no matter what you put in front of them.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And if you've been following along, this is the fourth episode in a series on how to get dogs to love to take training treats from you. Now, if you haven't watched or listened to the first three episodes, don't worry about it.

Listen to today's and then you can go back and listen to [Shaped by Dog episode number 269, 271, and 272](#). Today's episode carries on from our last one where I introduced you to the idea of using exciting games to jack up the value of food for your dogs. Last episode was about chase games. Today, we're actually going to amplify the chase by adding a wee bit of frustration to it in the form of restraining the dog.

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Now, don't worry if you don't have somebody to restrain your dog for you because you're going to do it yourself. I recommend you play all of today's games with your dog on a harness. But if your dog has never worn a harness before, then you need to get them used to that first. You can condition them. And I know it's going to be tough because you're watching this because your dog doesn't like food.

It's going to be tough because you have to use the highest value food there is. So, we're just going to get your dog used to wearing a harness. You can use the ['Place Your Face Game'](#) that I've shared on my YouTube channel. I'll put the link in the show notes. We just want to [condition the dog to be okay with sticking their head through a hole](#) AKA the harness.

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Now your dog's probably worn a collar, so conditioning to a harness very likely won't be a big deal for your dog. But I put that up front because we don't want the dog fussing and being worried about a harness while we're trying to play a game that's supposed to give them drive and love for food.

Get them comfortable with that harness first, and at least a couple of days of wearing it before we go to the games of restraint. Now we will eventually transition these games to a grabbing a hold of the collar. But because that will put pressure on your dog's trachea, I recommend you have a great big wide collar, like a Hound collar or one of the posh fancy collars that my dogs wear.

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They don't have to be fancy. I'm just kidding. But they really should be wide. All right. When should you be playing these games with your dogs? This is really important because in order to hedge your bets, in order to make sure you're getting maximum effectiveness from these games, you want to play the games when it's more likely your dog is going to want to be engaged with you.

So, coming home from a long walk, maybe you've been out hiking with your dog, that's probably not the best time to play. They might be a little more tired.



6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

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Likewise, right after you fed them a full meal, probably not the best time to play. So, you might want to just journal the times of the day when your dog appears more, frisky. Yes, I'm asking you to get the frisky meter out and measure when your dog is a little bit more of a kook.

So, I noticed that with my dogs, maybe just before mealtime or when somebody comes in, when I come home, if I've been away, after a bath or when they've just come out of swimming, those are times when they're just a little bit more playful.

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And those are the ideal times to start to play one of these food games. So, today's games are all about games of restraint. In our last episode, it was all about games of chase. I recommend that you play those games first because what we're doing is we're adding a little bit of frustration to the dog.

And ideally, we want them to know how to chase the food before we try to add the frustration to that element of chasing the food. But don't worry, these are all brand new games. Yes, I think I have six brand new games for you today.

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Game number one, *Circle Chases*. Now, just like any training game, it's really, really important that you get your mechanics first. And so, what we're going to do with this game, you are going to have your dog in a harness and your hand closest to the dog will grab the harness, playfully pulling the puppy or the dog back a little bit.

In your opposite hand, you're going to have a cookie, high value cookie, something that the dog wants. And what we're going to do is we're going to put it right in front of the dog's nose, kind of teasing them, then pull it away a few inches.

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We're going to have the cookie on an open palm, and you're going to keep saying, "get it, get it, get it." Now, you can hold the harness by your hand, or what I like to do is put the dog on a leash and pull the leash back, which allows me to get further away.

We want to make sure that the leash is pulled back on a 45-degree angle. So, your hand is going back over your dog's hips. If your hand goes up in the air, you're not creating tension back against the dog powering towards the food, you're creating tension up or worst-case scenario, you might even be creating tension towards the food.

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That's not what we want. The tension on your hand goes back towards your dog's hips, right? So, that the dog is fighting against that tension. The key is the leash has got to be taunt the whole time, right from the beginning. Because if it's loose on the harness and you say, "get it, get it, get it", and the dog starts to chase, then when that leash becomes tight, the dog's going to get jerked back.

And that might be enough for them to say, "This is a stupid game. I don't want to play your stupid game." So, if you're playing this on a leash, have it pulled, taunt, pull it back, get a little tension in that leash, put the cookie out in front. You're going to say, "get it, get it, get it." as you move the hand. It's a circle chase so you're just going to turn around in a circle. Not very much at first, maybe just one or two steps. "Get it, get it, get it."



6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

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Just before you release the tension and let the dog get the cookie, you're going to say the word "cook", which means you can take the cookie from a hand. So, it's going to look like this, "get it, get it, get it.", you're about to release the dog, say the word "cook", then push your hand towards the harness, which releases the tension and allows the dog to smash into that cookie and grab it.

So, we're using resistance, which creates a little frustration, which creates a little more drive for what the dog is seeing. "I want that cookie. I want that cookie. I want that cookie." Now, if your dog isn't going crazy for this, then you're either doing it at the wrong time or you don't have a high enough value cookie in your other hand.

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So, make sure you start this game with the highest value cookie you have. Eventually you're going to go to lower value cookies, but by playing the game, we're adding value to that cookie, right? So, it is cookie circles, under tension to get the dog driving. Plus, they hear the cue 'get it, get it, get it', that just means you now have permission to pull on this leash.

So, for those of you who say, "Oh, Susan, I don't want to play your silly games. I'm going to teach my dog to pull on a leash and get a cookie." Oh, nay nay to quote the great John Pinette. We are going to tell the dog when you hear 'get it, get it, get it', that's when you can pull on a leash. But when you're walking your dog, you're not saying "get it, get it, get it", right?

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So, they should have no business pulling on a leash. All right. So, that is game number one, Circle Chases. Getting the dog to chase in a little bit of a circle. And then when you're ready, say the word "cook", release the pressure, let them dive on your hand. Once the dog has played this a couple of times, you can then try to get halfway around the circle.

You don't really need to go a whole spin. Like you don't want to run the risk of getting dizzy and falling on your dog. That would ruin all the fun entirely. So, it doesn't matter how far you go. It's really about getting that dog to feel pressure and still want to drive for that food. It's jacking up the value of the food.

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Game number two, it's *Circle Chases with a Flick*. So, you're going to start off exactly the same way, but what you're going to do is once you say "cook" and you release that pressure, instead of keeping your hand stationary for the dog just to grab it, you're going to rotate the hand around and move it in the opposite direction.

So, the dog's path ends up looking like an S. So, they're starting at the lower end of the S and when you tell them they can get the cookie, you flick your hand. It's kind of like a backward C, I guess. It's not like an S at all. So, they're kind of going opposite to the direction they just went.

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It's just a flick of your wrist and the dog can go from chasing around your body in a clockwise direction, to a flick of your wrist. Now they're chasing around your body in a counterclockwise direction. Circle chases with a flick.

Now, with circle chases and with circle chases with the flick, super important that you play these games with both hands. These games are going to come in really handy for you.



6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

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Maybe you want to just get your dog's attention when you're walking down the street because there's a Black Lab walking down the street and they just love Black Labs, and they always want to play with every Black Lab they see.

But if you have conditioned this game, this trigger in them that, "Hey, so much fun with me, far more fun than Black Labs.", that you can then play, just break out into a game of circle chases. You know, maybe if you're walking in a really busy street, downtown city, maybe not a good idea, but an average street in an average suburb place, you'll be able to play this.

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Circle chases, just pull back on their harness or circle chases with a flick going back in the opposite direction. Fun, fun, fun. But make sure you do it with both hands. I know it's going to be icky and awkward for you and you better practice your mechanics without the dog first to get it fluid so that there is no reason for the dog to be able to chase that cookie on the hand.

Now you might say, "Susan, this sounds like luring. I thought you didn't like luring." It isn't luring because we're not trying to create a behavior. We're trying to jack the value of food. What jacks the value is creating a tension, a resistance to getting the value that increases the value for the dog. So, this is getting the dog to fight through something to get what they want.

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Now, they didn't really know they wanted it until we started playing these games and suddenly, they want it more and more and more. Before you know it, you have a way to train your dog because what used to be just, "Yeah" to your dog is now "Oh my gosh, this used to be an average cookie, but now it's just amazing because of all the games my mom plays with these cookies."

Restraint game number three, *Restraint to the Moving Bowl*. You will need a helper for this one. So, you know what? You haven't seen your sister, your mom, your neighbor for a long time. Just invite them over for a coffee and say, "I really need your help training my dog. So could you please you know, just come over. It'll only take a few minutes."

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It would be nice to catch up and have somebody to help you train your dog. So, the way this works is you're going to need a dinner dish. You know, I'll just use the dish I feed my dog out of. We're going to play this with a training treat, but don't be afraid to do this exact game with your dog's meal at mealtime. Maybe even half the meal, get them eating at gobbling up half the meal.

And then you can play it one more round, get them gobbling up the second part of their meal. But first, we're going to play it just with a high value training treat. So, we're going to start at one end of the room and it's a straight-line restraint.

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So, you're holding the leash, or you can do it just with the harness. The leash is attached to the harness, got tension on that leash. And so, what we're going to do is we have the person holding the cookie at the dog's eye level, head level, and they're going to start right near the dog's face.

And you can use your pump-up words like, "Oh, what's that?! Do you want that thing? Do you want that thing?" You've got tension on the leash that's pulling the harness back.



6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

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Remember your hands over your dog's hips or at least towards the middle of the dog's back. The person is going to move back away slowly and you're going to say the phrase, "get it, get it, get it, get it, get it." And when the dog is digging in, you're going to say, not cook this time, we're going to use the word "chow", which means you can take the food out of the bowl.

The person's backing away. You say, "get it, get it, get it", and then say the word "chow" before you release the tension and let the dog dive their face into the bowl. Helper can put the food bowl on the ground and the dog just eats the treat out of the bowl. Fun, fun, fun.

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When the dog gets on to this game, you can have that person back away faster or you know, if you're afraid of having somebody back and fall, they can hold it and face away from the dog, hold it at the dog's eye level and move away from the dog.

But it's your job to say, "get it, get it, get it", say the word "chow", release the tension, let that dog fly into the bowl. When the dog gets better, increase the distance, they're flying further. All right. So, that is restraint to the moving bowl.

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Next game, *Restraint to the Stationary Bowl*. You don't need a helper with this, but please do the moving bowl first. It creates a lot more excitement for the bowl. With a stationary bowl, we're going to do the exact same thing, but the bowl can be like in a corner, so it's not going to move. You're going to pull the dog away, put tension on that leash or harness, "get it, get it, get it", "chow", release, boom.

They fly their face into the bowl, and they grab the cookie. Great game to play with a little bit of their dinner to help jack up that value. So, restraint to the stationary bowl is something that I love to do to create value for my dogs driving to a bowl if I want to use it for training and agility. I might put a bowl as a distraction in weave pole training. I'll let them pull me to the weave poles. And as they're weaving, I'll say, "get it, get it, get it", "chow".

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Game number five. It's similar to one of our games of chase that we played in the last episode, but instead of restraining with the harness, we won't always have a harness on, we want to fade away from that. Yes, you can grab the collar, but I also want you just to restrain with the dog's shoulders.

So that could be a single hand across your dog's chest, depending on the size of your dog and your strength. That might not be possible. So, you might need to put two hands in front of the dog's chest. And what we're going to do is we're going to do cookie bowling into the corner, "get it, get it, get it", "search", and take off and run.

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Very similar to cookie bowling while holding the collar, but we want the dog to drag you a little bit, "get it, get it, get it", "search" before you turn and take off and run. So, we call that *PB&J - Push Back and Jam*, where we're pushing the dog away, creating resistance away from what they want, and then they fly.

It's like a spring-loaded boom towards the cookie. And then you run in the opposite direction, they catch you up. You have a big celebration, and it can include another cookie.



6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

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Our sixth and final game of restraint is *ItsYerChoice*. It's self-restraint. It's a game that creates anticipation for something the dog really wants, high value food.

Now that we've played all of these games and you've altered some of the practices in your home, as I mentioned in episode number 269, and you've start to create a general practice around your house, as I mentioned in 271. Now we have a dog who really likes food, it's time to play *ItsYerChoice*.

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Because here's what I noticed when people have dogs who aren't as driven for food or anything, they tend to relax rules, which is not a good thing to do because boundaries create a little bit of an anxiety around getting that food. And that little edge, that little frustration is what we call anticipation of something really, really exciting. That's what gets good stress in the dog's body.

And so, now our dog knows what the word "cook" means, they know what the word "search" means, we're going to play *ItsYerChoice*. And if you've never played this game before, I'm going to leave a link in the show notes, so you can go to the [ItsYerChoice Summit](#) and learn how to play the entire game.

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That is a game that is restraint, but it's self-restraint. The dog is restraining themselves because they know there are rules to getting that food. Now, like I mentioned in the last podcast episode, I have an eBook that I wrote for our Recallers community. And I'm including it for all of our newsletter subscribers.

It's got a lot of really good tips, even though it was written on [How To Create A Motivating Toy](#), exactly the same strategies will apply to creating motivation for food. It's just an extra add on. Some of the nuances of creating that anxiety with phrases like, "Oh no, what is it?!" Of things like hiding food in a drawer and pulling it out like a big surprise. All of that is in that eBook.

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So, if that's of interest for you, check [the link in the show notes](#), go ahead, join our newsletter list and we're going to make sure that you get that eBook delivered into your inbox. There you have it. This is the longest series I've ever done here on *Shaped by Dog*. I think it was super important because if a dog doesn't have outrageous drive for food, honestly training just becomes so problematic.

So, for those of you who actually teach classes, this is a great series to share with your students. And if you're in a class, be sure to share this series with your instructor so that they can share it with other people.

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And if what I've shared in here for you makes sense and gives you an 'aha moment', please, I would love for you to go to wherever you're watching or listening to this podcast and give us a thumbs up or a review, including hitting the five-star review. Because that's what allows people to say, "This is a great podcast, and it really needs to be shared by more and more people."

But for now, jump over to YouTube, leave me a comment, what did you think of the Games of Restraint. Please try them and come on back and tell me what you thought. I'll see you next time right here on *Shaped by Dog*.





Episode: #273

6 Fun Restraint Games For Dogs To Increase Food Drive For Picky Eaters

Learn How To Play ItsYerChoice

[ItsYerChoice Summit](#)

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[Click HERE to get your copy of our "How To Create A Motivating Toy" eBook](#)

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 269: Why Do Some Dogs Seem to Have Less Food Drive Than Others – 10 Reasons to Consider](#)

[Podcast Episode 271: Structure Your Dog Training To Create Food Drive In Your Treat Fussy Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 272: 10 Engaging Chase Games To Increase Your Picky Eater Dog's Food Drive](#)

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

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



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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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