

How To Train A Dog From Day One: Avoid Common Puppy Mistakes Through Games & Enrichment

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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If you've tuned into this episode, and by chance you're either getting a new puppy or rescue dog, or you have a new puppy or rescue dog, I promise you that by listening to this episode, you would decrease the number of challenges you would have in living with and training that puppy by at least half.

Would you believe me? Well, I think that I cannot just deliver that on that promise. I think I can overdeliver on this promise because of how many mistakes I see people make with their new puppies or rescue dogs.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And if you are watching or listening to this episode and you're saying, "Well, I don't have a new puppy or rescue dog," trust me, we can still make a difference on the behaviors you have, especially if you're dealing with unwanted behavior. And here's why I know that this episode can make a difference.

Now, if you've been following [Shaped by Dog](#), you know I have talked about living in a reinforcement-based dog training program, raising a puppy or a dog in a reinforcement-based dog training program. That doesn't mean "we always say yes, we let the dog have everything they want when they want it, they rule the world." It's far from that. I've been saying this for 30 years.

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[Positive is not permissive](#). Just because we want to be using positive reinforcement in our interactions with dogs, that doesn't mean we're going to be permissive, because when you are permissive, you are allowing the dog to seek reinforcement in other places.

Just like I talked about in [podcast episode number 286](#), how the rehearsals of unwanted behavior are what is going to get you in trouble. In this episode, I want to talk a little bit more about what those rehearsals are and what they might lead you to and what you can do differently.

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So, when you're thinking about raising a puppy, it means different things to different people. If you are listening to this, and maybe you've never looked into how raise a puppy, it could be you bring the puppy home, you let them sleep in your bed, and it's all a big gamble, like maybe you'll get a good one.

I've owned dogs for more than 30 years. Every single one of them has been not just a good one, a phenomenal one. Every single one of them I would describe as my 'once in a lifetime dog.' Yes, I have owned 11 once in a lifetime dogs. Because I've been very intentional about the way that I raise them.

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I have not had to deal with the typical problems that most puppy owners or new rescue dog owners have had to deal with. Yes, if you're getting a rescue dog, they might come with some baggage, and we're going to talk about how to unpack that. But here's the problem that I see. Every year we do a [free online dog training masterclass](#) where we give unbelievable cutting-edge information to anybody who wants to join.



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Now, the vast majority of the people who watch that free series are new rescue dog owners or new puppy owners. But guess what? It's also the smallest group that decides to join one of our programs like Home School the Dog or Recallers, which are both phenomenal choices for people who have a new rescue dog or a new puppy.

Because everybody thinks "this one is going to be one of the good ones." And when those people see that the dog isn't one of the good ones, now they're overwhelmed with challenges and that's when they start Googling our dog training. "How can I, in a reinforcement-based way, fix all these problems?"

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The best way to have done it is to have not allowed them to develop in the first place, which is why if you're a new puppy owner or a new rescue dog owner, this is the perfect timing for you. But I'm still here for you if you, like most people, rely on hope, "I think my dog's going to be one of the good ones."

And you rely on hope, but you get in over your head probably when that puppy is nine months old to a year and a half, and maybe you're here listening but unfortunately, a lot of those puppies end up in rescue situations because their owners just give up on them.

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"I didn't get one of the good ones. I'm going to try another one. Try to get one of the good ones this time." One of the good ones, guys, every one of them is one of the good ones. Every one of them can become one of the great ones. Every one of them can become the dog of your dreams.

So, what do we have to have happen? Puppies are always going to make choices we're not going to want them to make. They are puppies. They are curious learners. They investigate life with their mouth. They get excited, especially when they're tired and they make choices that we'd rather not see them make.

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So, what I talked about in podcast episode number 286 was preventing the rehearsal of unwanted behavior. Now, sometimes we can't prevent it. Sometimes it just happens. But here's the thing that I've been saying for 30 years, and I wish every dog owner believed me.

I'm going to say this statement and I want you to rehearse it in your mind over and over again. So, it's like embedded in your brain. All behavior is communication. That's all. All behavior is communication. So, the puppy that's getting very nippy and bity, they're communicating something with you.

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It could be something about the quality of dog food you're feeding them. It could be something about the lack of sleep that they've had. It could be something about the fact that their early life, potentially the breeder was uneducated and didn't give them enough food or made them fight for food, or they were raised in an environment they didn't have access to food. And so that's made them more of a bitey puppy.

So, behaviors, communication, we first have to identify with who do we have to begin with. Do we have a snuggly puppy? Do we have a puppy that has got a lot of energy? Do we have a puppy who excessively uses their mouth? What we want to do is set the puppy up for success, and that's where structured game-based training comes in. So, we want to break that puppy's life into, yes, we want to train them.



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And I mentioned already we want to train them with games because that gets buy-in from the puppy. They start off as curious learners, but they become eager learners. Are you going to be an eager learner if you're uncomfortable with what's going on when you're learning? No, you're not, and neither will your dog.

So, a game-based program that creates lessons in the form of a game every dog would want to play, or every puppy would want to play. So, we need to consider what training is that puppy going to get? We need to consider how are we going to enrich that puppy's life? Because if we don't plan for it, the puppy will find their own enrichment.

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It could be in digging holes in your backyard. It could be in shredding your couch. It could be in fence fighting with your neighbor's dog. So, these are all rehearsals of unwanted behavior. If we can give those puppies structured enrichment activities, and I've talked about that in podcast episode number 286. Now we have things to go to.

Alright, I wake you up in the morning and you go to our [puppy essentials playlist](#). I'll give you the routine of what you do with that puppy in a day but preventing the rehearsals or as I said, sometimes we can't prevent them. So, it's recovery from a rehearsal.

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So, let's say, your puppy slips away from their leash, and they start chasing another dog, and then the puppy and the other dog just start running around with the other puppy and you can't get ahold of them, and you call your puppy, but they're not coming. Why? That structured learning wasn't in place.

They don't naturally want to come back to you no matter what kind of a big meatball you have, unless you've played games that create a trigger in them that makes them want to come back no matter what. But that's not going to happen in the first two weeks. You have that puppy invest 16 weeks, and you will see a massive difference.

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You will be creating patterns that are going to be easy to follow through on. So, when you get that rehearsal of something unwanted, the best we can do is recover. What's our plan for recovery? Number one, how are we going to stop the reinforcement that the puppy is getting by doing that activity?

I mean ideally, it's not happening in an environment where potentially that puppy could get hit by a car. That's the worst-case scenario. So, the reason we don't want the puppy to get access to making poor decisions so that they don't rehearse unwanted behaviors, number one is because rehearsals, any actor will tell you, create better performance.

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Athletes practice their sport over and over again, so they get better performances. The more rehearsals your puppy gets of an unwanted behavior, the better they get at it. And so, we want to prevent any while we're growing our training, our enrichment, our engagement with them, with every member of the family.

We want to make sure that we're creating a great life for that puppy, but a great way for that puppy to live in your life. Remember, behavior is communication.



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So, you might have a pool in your backyard and “Oh my gosh, my puppy loves to swim!” That's great, except if they get access to that worst case scenario unfortunately, I do have, know of several puppies who have died in their own home swimming pool. That's worst-case scenario.

But also, you could have a dog that they see a body of water anywhere they're gone. You can't call them back. I love that my dogs love to swim, but I intentionally don't allow my puppies ever to go in water until I teach them how to recall away from the water.

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It's so much easier to get a recall away from the water if they have never experienced how amazing that water is. Puppies that are allowed to [greet every single person](#) that they see, “Oh yeah, I'm going to see them and I'm going to see them.”

You are rehearsing behaviors that potentially you end up with one of those puppies that can't pass a person on the street without screaming because they become this frantic greeter that they have to greet every single person. Yes, it's important that you [socialize your puppy](#). Yes, it's important that you grow confidence.

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That's our number one job, growing confidence in our puppies. But that doesn't mean they get to greet every single person. It's also important that they either sit beside you or maybe you have a bed with you that they can jump up on and watch puppies go by and watch people go by and know that they don't have to greet them unless you give them access.

So, there's free access, meaning they do what they want when they want, and then there's you as a gatekeeper who creates access coming through you. So, if I wanted my puppy to see another person, I would have them do a behavior, like a hand target, something simple, and then tell them, “Go see.”

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If they were a wee puppy and they don't know anything, I might have them in my arms patting them, and then I'll pass them over to somebody and they get the socializing of other people. Maybe you have a puppy that is shredding pieces of your carpet, some of your clothing, maybe even their toys, and you're going to say “Oh, that's just them being a puppy.”

That's them rehearsing behaviors that they're getting better at. So not only do you run the risk of all this damaged furniture, but you also run the risk of the puppy ingesting some of that of the puppy needing surgery at a very young age.

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Like all these horrible outcomes that possibly might happen. Now, I'm not trying to scare you. I'm trying to tell you it is avoidable. It's avoidable. An investment of your time in the first six months that you own a puppy, any investment of your time, I promise you will pay dividends 10, 25, or 50-fold. Who out there would not invest in a stock that was going to pay you back a tenfold dividend or a 25 or a hundred-fold dividend?

The investment of your time, creating a confident puppy who fits into your world, who learns how to respond to what you want the first time you ask because you taught them with games and you prevented the rehearsals of unwanted behavior by using things like what we call the gated community, an ex-pen for that puppy to be raised in and teaching them Crate Games.



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Crate Games isn't just about learning to tolerate a crate. It's about all the lessons of self-control and drive and play and connection with you. So, while you are preventing the unwanted behavior of the puppy just running and barking, being at an agility trial, for those of you who do agility and just let your puppy bark, as other dogs are running agility, these are things that are going to cause a wedge between you and your puppy.

You might think it's cute. I have the vision to see where it leads to, it's so much easier to not have to deal with unwanted behavior, the over aroused dog that you have no control over because you allowed the rehearsals of things that you probably shouldn't have.

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And to be clear, I'm not saying "I don't allow my puppy to play with other puppies, I don't allow my puppies to ever swim, I don't allow my puppies to ever shred anything." My puppies shred lots of paper and [puppy bombs](#), and they learn through [Nina Ottosson's puppy puzzles](#). And they do play with other puppies, but it's structured play, meaning I will do a game and then invite them to go play.

But until I have a recall away, I might do things like use a bend in a building so the puppy might hear another puppy, but they can't see them. And I'll practice some on leash recalls with that young puppy so that I'm helping them to understand, yes, there's a puppy there, but "Hey, remember that fun game that we played where you chase me?"

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So that when they see a puppy close, I can call their name and then they will come and chase me. Then I don't mind if they play together. Absolutely. I want my puppy to be well socialized with other dogs. But that also means that the ability to go and visit other dogs, the access isn't free.

It always comes through the gatekeeper because that allows productive rehearsals of things that help grow a confident puppy but also grows connection with me so that I can keep that puppy safe as they're growing up. Because I do know that they will reliably respond to their name.

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So, wherever you are in your puppy ownership, please take the time to join one of our programs because I know we will exponentially guarantee outcomes. But if that's not in the cards for you, at least please go through our puppy essentials playlist on YouTube so that you can get an understanding.

You can set up an environment where your puppy is safe, you are growing connection with the two of you, and you will be in a position to reap the benefits of that investment of your time and good quality dog training. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.





Episode: #308

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Susan Garrett's Birthday Celebration

[Free Hand Target Masterclass](#)

Crate Games

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

Resources:

[Susan Garrett's Shaped by Dog Podcast](#)

[Podcast Episode 198: What Does "Positive Is Not Permissive" Really Mean In Dog Training?](#)

[Podcast Episode 286: Frustrated Puppy, Frustrated Human! Strategies For Wins With Puppy Raising](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 109: Project Calm Dog: Prevent Over Enthusiastic Greetings](#)

[Podcast Episode 246: Susan Garrett's Puppy Socialization Strategies For Raising Confident, Happy Dogs](#)

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

[Nina Ottosson's Puzzle Toys](#)



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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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