



# Episode: #315

## Dog Enrichment Secrets Part 2: 30 Day Enrichment Challenge + Free Planner PDF

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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Hypothetical scenario, have you ever heard of a dog shredding pillows or your couch or digging holes or chewing on wood, particularly baseboards or maybe even drywall? Your first thought might be, "Man, why do I have the naughty puppy?" "Man, why is my dog being such a pain in my butt?" And the truth is, it's your puppy creating their own enrichment activities.

It's your puppy telling you, "I have emotional, instinctive, and social drives that I need to meet. And they're not being met for me so I'm taking it upon myself to create my own program." Today I'm going to help you create your own enrichment program so that your dog doesn't have to create one for themselves.

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Hi, I am Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. You know, it's kind of ironic that people have this litany of problems that they have with their puppy or their dog that gets that dog labeled as a problem dog, or a problem puppy, or a, you know, a stupid puppy, or a puppy that doesn't listen. And in actual fact, it's all about creating enrichment for their own environment.

If you were with me on [part one of our enrichment series](#), we talked about how there are different activities that can help meet the needs of your dog through enrichment, things that are enriching the dog through cognitive functioning or socializing, or sensory enrichment, or yes, instinctive enrichment.

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In that episode, I gave you some homework to watch your dog, study what your dog does, and see what is it that gets your dog excited. In this episode, we're going to go through 30 different types of enrichment activities, and each one of those probably could branch into 30 more.

So, you're going to have the potential of hundreds of activities that you can decide if this is something your dog would like or even test them on your dog, and your dog will tell you if it's something they like. Keeping in mind that true enrichment creates variety for the dog, it gives the dog autonomy to make choices, that it gives the dog some level of challenge and it creates some balance for them in their life.

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You want these enrichment activities to not squash the dog's confidence, not have them try something and then give up. So, you've got to match the activity to your dog's current confidence level or developmental level, and challenge them when it's appropriate, when they're ready for it, challenging them to a new level of that enrichment activity.

Okay, so if you didn't listen to part one, I suggest you go back and listen to that and then jump over to this one where we're going to deep dive into the activities and how you can create a schedule for your own dog.

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You know, enrichment is a big umbrella. And there's a lot of subcategories and a lot of crossover in these categories. For example, there's a lot of enrichment that might involve another person in the room. There's some enrichment that the dog does all on their own.



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You want to make sure that the enrichment you're doing is not trying to control the dog. In that, in my last episode I said, yes, training is enriching, but only if the dog has autonomy in that training, only if the dog has choice through the learning, only if it's training without aversives or coercion.

So, training games like a lot of the ones you're going to find over on [my YouTube channel](#), things like [Targeting](#), [Hand Targets](#), [Pivots and Spins](#), [Vito's Thinking game](#), and of course [ItsYerChoice](#) and [Crate games](#), and [Restraint Recall](#).

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All of these are enriching the dog's life. All of these are games that are going to be interactive. All of these are games that give the dog autonomy. All of these are games that actually create a better relationship with the dog but give the dog tools to be an amazing pet in your home.

So, enrichment in our first category is *enrichment that also engages*. But when enrichment engages, oftentimes there's some real lessons that can be learned for the dog.

Things like [a tug game](#). A tug game could be a mindless game that allows a dog to release an outlet, have some physical activity, but it can also be a game that can build self-control, that the dog can learn things like when to out when I ask you to, or to bring it back when I ask you to.

So, training games if done properly, build that dog's confidence, build your relationship with your dog, but bring such fulfillment to that dog's life.

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Next category would be *enrichment that also socializes*. For example, taking your puppy to a cafe. I've talked about this in [podcast episode number 180](#). I would always bring a dog bed. Having a lunch with a friend. The puppy is out in the fresh air. They're seeing people and dogs walk by, but they're not interacting with them.

They're maybe chewing on a bone, another little enrichment activity, but it's such a great way to allow them to see activities and learn to not be afraid or not to react to these different activities. But enrichment that socializes could also be planning a puppy play date.

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If you have a friend that is a puppy of about the same age and you know that they're similar level of confidence that they can get together and have some play, ideally with you calling them out to that play, but that's another podcast all in itself.

Hikes with friends. I love going on hikes with my friends and they bring their dogs. So, we might have, you know, 15 or 20 different dogs that all get along. Some of them don't even know each other. When I'm in Germany, I might go on hikes with my friends, and their dogs have never met my dogs.

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But we know the level of confidence in all of the dogs. We know the level of socializing, and we know there's not going to be a problem with one dog being overwhelmed by that environment. Remember I said socializing should not ever be overwhelming to the dog.

Enrichment that socializes could be taking your dog to one of your local shops that allow dogs. We have a chain here in Canada called Canadian Tire. It's got everything. It's not just tires. It's like a hardware store. They encourage people to bring their dog.



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So, we'll often take a dog there, especially if we have a young dog. Sometimes we'll work on the dog just [lying on the spot](#) and watching people walk by. Sometimes when people say, "Can I pet your dog?", then we'll work on [sitting for greetings](#), things like that. It's being social in a way that brings out the best in that puppy or dog but also brings some enrichment into their life.

Okay, our next category, and this is a biggie and there's going to be a lot of crossover, and that is the one that we talked about in part one, that is *enrichment that meets your dog's instinctive needs*. So, things like shredding [a puppy bomb](#) to get the cookies inside. Shredding paper or shredding boxes or putting cookies in rolled up paper and putting them in boxes and putting them in another box, like unpacking boxes meets needs on so many levels.

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Things like chasing [a flirt pole](#) or sniffing in [a snuffle mat](#), depending on the instinctive drive that you think your dog needs the most fulfillment with, then you might have several of these activities that your dog's going to love to do.

The [food puzzle games](#) are great ones for most dogs. Giving them a stuffed [Toppl](#) or a [Kong](#) with some yummy surprises in there, things they've never had before, or a food tower you can freeze. Like there's so many things that you can give your dog.

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And you'll want to write all these suggestions down and highlight the ones that our dog can do them alone, 'I'm going to do these with my dog.' or 'I need another person, or I needed another dog.' Just kind of make a highlight for the ones that are going to work for you and your dog.

Next category would be *enrichment that actually could also be fitness*. Obviously going on a hike with other dogs. Let me just take this point to say enrichment can include your regular walks every day, but your regular walks should not be your dog's only enrichment. And enrichment should not take the place of your regular walks.

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So, I'm going to say that again. Your regular walks can be very enriching to your dog, but they should not be the only thing in the dog's life that is enriching, nor should enrichment take the place of a regular walk. So, you shouldn't say, "Oh, I'm going to give my dog a stuffed Toppl today instead of taking it for a walk."

Ideally, your walks become incredibly enriching when you plan— you know, you might have five to ten different routes you can take if you're walking your neighborhood or on weekends, if you're going to a bigger event, you might have 10 or more different conservation areas or local waterfalls that you can visit with your dog that you can take them to.

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Variety is just so critical when you're walking your dogs. I know the difference with my dogs when I go to a different country. They love going for forest walks when we're walking in a different country. So, you can see the difference in the dogs, and you can see the difference in how exhausted they are when they get home from that.

Even when I'm walking around the field with my dogs here and they get that field walk every day, I go on different paths, I go in different directions, and here's what I observed.



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The first kilometer or so that those dogs are walking, they're kind of like watching each other running ahead, you know, stopping and waiting for me, engaging with me a little bit then running ahead a little bit more and looking back for me. By the last kilometer, they're all just [sniffing on the path](#).

They're all just there walking ahead, they're staying with me, but they're not trying to look at each other and engage with each other. I just think that's so cool that they're altering their own forms of engagement on this walk that is engaging. Put some real deep thought into how your walks with your dogs can be more engaging.

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Yes, they are giving your dog some fitness, giving you a little bit of fitness, but you can even bring in some training to those games by having them do hand touches or spins at the sides, knowing that you want to give them the freedom to just walk and sniff.

If it is a dog or a puppy that seems to get a ton of environmental reinforcement, I actually reward each and every time they come back in and check back in with me because I want my dogs to have fun on their walks. But if it's an off leash walk, I do want them to check back in with me. Super important.

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Okay, [other things that can be fitness](#). Throwing a flying disc for your dog or a game of retrieve can be enriching and can be fitness. Doing things like fitness work, getting them on a balance plank, doing things like inflatable discs or slack lines. There's a fun one to do for a dog for engagement that's also fitness. Things like a big swimming pool. A little kiddy pool filled with balls like a ball pit. My puppies always love that.

And when those puppies get older, I like them digging in a sand pit. You might have a special area of your yard where the dog can dig in. It's great exercise for the front end, and it's something depending on the dog, like my Terriers, they loved to dig. I want them to dig only in one particular area because I don't want holes all through my backyard. They'll find their own enrichment if we don't provide it for them.

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Okay, our next category might be one that checks all of the boxes, but *enrichment that really satisfies the need for challenge and curiosity*. So definitely things like food puzzles will do that. Putting cookies in a muffin tin and then covering them with rolled up socks. So, the dog has to figure out how to get the socks out, to get the cookies underneath.

I loved teaching the dog to hit a button which turns on a remote feeder and then move that remote feeder maybe up or down a flight of stairs. The dog has to move through the house, might be in a different room, so they might have to like nose target the button that hits [the remote feeder](#) to dispel some treats, and it might be in a completely different room.

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So, it's a little bit of fitness really, but it's a little bit of curiosity. Of course, when you start that, you start them super, super close together. Things like bottle spinners, where you might have seen people that put like a dowel with plastic bottles with holes in it and treats on it. So, the dog with their nose, move those plastic bottles to get the cookies to spin out. You could do that just with a regular plastic water bottle, make holes in it, put some cookies in there, and then the dogs can roll it around on the floor.



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However, do note, anything like my dogs, they'll just crunch them up so that isn't one— you know, I said you're going to find what enrichment activities work really well for your dogs. That one has never really worked well for my dogs.

If you have a remote feeder that has a button that tilts, meaning you can put it on tilt. I have a remote feeder that does this. You can put it on tilt, and if you just move, it's a motion thing, then it will dispense the treat. Why is that cool? Because you can put that tilt mode into one of those [wobble Kongs](#). So, wobble Kong on its own is an enrichment activity. You can just put cookies in it and the dog moves it around and cookies fall out.

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So, if I put the button for the remote feeder on the wobble Kong, the dog just like hitting the button on the wall in the other remote feeder, my dogs hit the wobble Kong, and it will dispense treats from the feeder in a different location. So again, this stimulates the brain. It's enriching, the dog can do it on their own. You're not going to leave them there all day with this.

But it does give the dog a way to tire the brain, a way to engage with their own environment, giving them full autonomy to do an activity that you are not interfering with, and you are not controlling. And finally, *enrichment activities that have a sensory component* are always something to throw in, even on a small scale.

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So, things like getting a mat that have little nubs on that the dog has to walk on or getting a lick mat that has different levels of crevices in there, or different textures on what the dog is licking. So, you can get like a plastic lick mat, you can get a latex ring with different cutouts in there. All of those create different sensory experiences for the dog.

That is not one that I spend a lot of time and effort doing on myself because my dogs just love licking things out to their food towers, and it doesn't seem to matter which kind or how many different textures there are, but sensory wise things under their feet, I think that's a big deal. So, are you having them walking down something that's a bit of an angle?

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Are you walking on something like a piece of carpet, a piece of hardwood floor, a piece of a plastic runner that has ridges in it? All of those things. Especially if you have a dog that don't like walking on slippery floors, like put all different textures in there and give them different reinforcement for walking on those textures and help build their confidence in that environment.

Another great sensory activity that my dogs adore is getting massages. There's so many great Canine Massage Therapists in my area. My dogs get a massage every single week, and I have three or four different practitioners that work on them, and so they get a different experience every time. They love it.

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You can start yourself by going to [podcast episode number 191](#) and doing the relaxation protocol, which is really just helping that dog to relax. And you can just do long body strokes. You can rub their tips of their ears. You can spread out their toes, maybe even put some coconut oil on those pads, like just make it an amazing spa-like adventure, stimulating different parts of the dog. Trust me, they will turn into therapy loving dogs just like my dogs are as well.



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Alright, so there you have it. There's tons of ways you can expand each and every category that I've given you. Important that you test out different categories. Find the ones that your dog loves. Now let's plan a schedule that works for you and your dog.

Okay, if you download the PDF that we have for you, you will find a calendar 30 days that you can plan the next 30 days for your dog. You're going to make a list. Let's get a list of 50 or 60 different activities. I gave you some categories, like shaping a trick can be both engaging and enriching for your dog.

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Going on a hike where there's gravel under your dog's feet, going on a hike where there's grass under your dog's feet, going on a hike where there's a stream that you have to walk through. So, there's three different sensory experiences for your dog. So, I'm sure it'd be easy to get a hundred or more.

But let's just start with things that you're pretty confident your dog would like, decide the level of challenge you're going to introduce to your dog, and I would make sure you create an intentional balance, meaning enrichment things a dog can do alone and enrichment things that you are going to do with your dog.

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I'm not saying it's going to be 50-50. So, for my dog, they probably get 10% social enrichment with dogs outside of my home, they probably get maybe 20% enrichment on their own without any human intervention, and the rest is all enrichment through activities with us. Some will be training, some will be fitness, some will be sensory like massages.

Heck, some dogs will show you their need for sensory activity by rolling on their back. My dogs love rolling on a back. And when they take a toy or a bone and roll on that, that's showing you the need for sensory enrichment.

So, make sure you leave a few safe chew bones out for your dog that they can try and roll on. They might surprise you. Let me know if your dog is like my dog and loves to roll on their back. Every single dog in my house loves to do that, so I don't think your dogs are going to be any different than mine.

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So, you've got your activity. You've got your categories. You know your own schedule. You know the days where you have a little bit more time. Those are the times that you can do engagement activities to bring the dogs enrichment. But I'd love for you to have a goal of putting at least two to three different enrichment activities.

They might only take you, you know, two or three minutes, but you're building a relationship with your dog and you're helping your dog to live an amazingly enriched AKA fulfilled life. Remember, don't overwhelm the dog. Match the difficulty with the dog's current confidence level and add challenge to encourage that dog to grow and learn.

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So, download your PDF, create your list of all the activities you want to try, plot them in on the different days of the week. Maybe weekdays are super busy for you, so you're going to build a bunch of puppy bombs on the weekend that you can use one day a week. Remember, variety is key. So, you're not going to do Kong Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Ideally, you're going to have at least 20 different enrichment activities that you're going to mix up through the entire month.





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Some of them you might use three or four times. Some of them you might use once a week. If you have a dog who has a favorite game they love to play, and you only play it once a week, man, it will become so enriching for your dog.

But if you're playing it every day, then they're going to go, "Oh yeah, we play that game." Now I'm not saying stop playing your dog's favorite game but make it a little bit more special by giving them more variety and doing different things with them.

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Let me know if this makes sense to you. Let me know if you are going to download and schedule your dog's enrichment by jumping over to YouTube and leaving me a comment on this episode. And while you're there, please be sure to give us a like, subscribe to the channel if you're not already a subscriber.

And share this episode with your friend because what an amazing world it would be for dogs if every single listener shared this with somebody who owned a dog and more dogs got to live that amazing, enriched life. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

[Download Your Dog's Enrichment Blueprint](#)

[Podcast Episode 314: Dog Enrichment Secrets Part 1: Using Your Dog's Natural Instincts To Build Variety And Engagement](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 68: 3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know.](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 281: How Vito's Thinking Games Will Transform Your Dog Training](#)

[YouTube Video: How to Train Your Dog to Leave It with No Command: Susan Garrett's ItsYerChoice](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 302: The Recall Myth: Why Your Off Leash Dog Isn't Coming When Called And How To Fix It](#)

[Podcast Episode 89: Why Dogs Should Not Tug: The Truth Revealed](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 121: How To Stop Dogs Jumping Up On People](#)

[Podcast Episode 145: 10 Ways To Teach A Dog To Lay Down And How To Shape It Without Luring](#)

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

[Flirt Pole](#)

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[Snuffle Mat](#)

[Nina Ottosson Food Puzzles](#)

[West Paw Zogoflex Toppl Treat Dispensing Dog Toy Puzzle](#)

[KONG Classic Stuffable Dog Toy](#)

[Podcast Episode 74: Yes, Susan Garrett's Dogs Sniff On Walks](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Exercising Your Dog's Body and Mind: Tips and Games with Susan Garrett.](#)

[PETGEEK Treat Dispenser](#)

[KONG Wobblers](#)

[Podcast Episode 191: Get Your Dog To Calm Down With This Common Sense Protocol For Relaxation](#)

[YouTube Channel: DogsThat](#)

If your dog loves wood, Susan's dogs love this chew: [SPOT Coffee Wood Dog Chew Toy](#)



### 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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