

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

Whether your dog is 8 months old or 18 years old, the way your dog moves, it tells a lot about their longevity. In today's episode, I'm gonna share more than 20 different exercises that I teach to my puppies and continue to use as my dogs grow up, so I have a baseline of what that movement looks like, and I can spot the earliest signs of trouble.

00:00:33

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. You know, they say the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, and the next best time is today. So today, I'm going to give you the opportunity to start your dog or puppy on a pre-planned fitness program.

Now to some of you the word fitness conjures you know, a lot of discomfort and pain, but put aside your own personal feelings because we can create fitness for the dog in the form of a game that they're going to love to play.

00:01:02

As a matter of fact, your dog's joy is the number one factor that determines whether we move forward with any exercise. Okay, I have divided the exercises that I use for my dogs into four categories. Number one being proprioception, their ability to know how to move their paws in space. Strength and stability is number two.

Then, flexibility and conditioning. But before we jump into those exercises, let me share with you that I strongly encourage you get a complete physical for your dog before you start any kind of a fitness program. Talk to your Veterinarian. Bonus points if you have a Rehab Veterinarian. I get my dogs into a Rehab Veterinarian once a year just for baseline measurements.

00:01:43

And if you want a fitness program specific for your dog, there's so many qualified, certified online practitioners that can help you with that. I find the prerequisites that really help my dog with their fitness, number one nail trim.

So, if you're a regular listener to Shaped by Dog, you know that I like a nice tight nail trim. So, I'll give you a link in the show notes to show you exactly [how I like to cut my own dog's nails](#), and more importantly the length, because the longer the dog's nails are, the more discomfort they're going to have as they age.

00:02:17

Other things that are gonna help with this exercise, [the ItsYerChoice game](#). Again, I'll leave a link in the show notes for anybody who wants to join our ItsYerChoice Summit to start playing that game with your dog and [Crate Games](#) is always an asset to anything that you're going to teach your dog.

Okay, let's get started. Category number one, *proprioception*. How your dog moves those paws in space. One of the greatest exercises to help a dog with proprioception is something called cavalettis. It's very formulaic.



00:02:44

It depends on the dog's height and the spacing between these little bars and you put bars on the ground and have your dogs trot through them. One of the problems with that, when we're talking senior fitness, is they can stumble, they can trip. It gets to be a little bit of a hazard for those dogs. So, I came up with something that I call hose proprio.

You take your garden hose, and you lay it out where you have the space. I just do it in my garage in circles on the ground. Start with your dog in [the Hot Zone](#) waiting and watching, and you're gonna drop cookies in the hose, release the dog. And as they're searching for their cookies, drop more cookies in a way that they don't see.

00:03:25

So, you're continuing to say "search". The really cool thing about this exercise is the first time you do it, the dog is going to stumble and step on the hose. But very quickly, even my 15-year-old dog, Swagger stopped stepping on the hose and picked his way through the hose.

This exact same thing happened with one of my friend's puppies that we worked through hose proprio. Stepping on the hose very quickly adapted, and their paw never stepped on the hose again. It's kind of cool how that happens, and so it's an easy access proprioception exercise. Pretty much anyone should have access to a hose. Great exercise as a way to get that dog moving.

00:04:05

Oh, I forgot to say off the top. Please warm your dog up before you do any of this, even as much as a five-minute walk and then get them into a trot for a few minutes. Now we're ready to go. Second cousin to hose proprio is doing similar thing through a ladder. Let the dog find the cookies in the ladder.

Eventually going to a place where you're not dropping as many cookies and we can even get them trotting through the ladder. So, add a couple cones to the end of this. And you've got a really great fitness exercise where the dog wraps the cone and trots through the ladder.

00:04:35

But caution, we don't want the dog galloping through that ladder, only walking or trotting. A really simple exercise to start to have an awareness of the front paws is paws up, [take a low target](#) something no more than a couple of inches off the ground and have your dog walk over it. This could be a platform at first where we're just giving them cookies for walking over.

And once they have value for walking over, we're gonna stop them by reinforcing them for just putting their paws up. Put their paws up, throw a cookie away. They put their paws up, throw a cookie away. Eventually you can add the cue 'paws up' and they will put their paws up on anything. It's a great skill if you want to take pictures with your dog posing on a rock or a stump.

00:05:17

Similar to that, we do feet up, which means we want just their back paws on that. So, you'll walk them across that platform stopping by giving them lots of cookies when just their back feet are on that target. Now here, you can't do search and expect they're gonna find their way.

You're gonna have to walk them back on that target and walk them off. Eventually though, you can just move so that their feet are just slightly off the target and wait for them to back up. And even if they touch the target, you're gonna reinforce that.



00:05:48

Getting them to put their “feet” i.e. their back paws on that target. Eventually we want to make that target nice and small because that's gonna lead us into our next exercise. Next up, simple Perch Work. I'll leave a link in the show notes on how you can start your dog on [Perch Work](#).

But we want the dog getting their paws up on the perch and pivoting their backside in one direction and the other, observing the way they move, crossing over their legs and behind, or sidestepping and shuffling. Do they have the same freedom both directions?

00:06:20

It's not gonna start off that way, but you keep at it, you are gonna find your dog will effortlessly pivot one direction to the other. So, once you've top paws up and feet up, you can do the exact same exercise on something that isn't as stable, like a couch cushion. Because that creates not just proprioception, but a little strength training and stability.

So, some of these exercises are going to cover many different categories and that's okay. So do that paws up with a couch cushion and feet up with the same couch cushion. Or you can put multiple couch cushions on the floor. I'm sure your partner will love the look of that and have them walk from paws up, walk forward to feet up, and then move on to the next couch cushion.

00:07:04

Paws up, feet up, and you've got a little circuit around your living room or all around your house with cushions and you're building a little fitness track. So that's some ideas for proprioception. Next up, *strength and stability*, which honestly, the couch cushions on the floor, that really is very much a strength and stability exercise.

But a simple way to start with strength and stability is just to straddle your dog, if they're not a Great Dane, or stand in front of your dog. But I like to start this exercise with a straddle because we're gently gonna touch each shoulder, and what we want is for the front paws to stay where they are and the shoulders just to sway back and forth.

00:07:45

We are asking the dog to use their core muscles and their small stability muscles to rebalance themselves. Such a great exercise for dogs of any age, but particularly senior dogs. But I use this exercise as a form of warmup for my agility dogs as well. Similarly, we do the same thing with the rear end, just pushing slightly on the side of their thighs to get a little bit of sway back and forth.

Great for stability. Now, if your dog with just a small sway in either one of these moves their leg, that's telling they need more strength probably in their core or maybe their adductors. So, make it smaller and work on some of these other exercises that will help build that strength for them. Simple exercises that's so beneficial to dogs of all ages are paw lifts.

00:08:35

So, kneeling down in front of your dog to start. We need your dog standing. So maybe just give them reinforcements for standing. And if you don't know [how to teach your dog to stand](#), I've got a video on that. I'll leave a link in the show notes.

And hey, when you click that link and you are on [our YouTube page](#), be sure to like, comment, and subscribe to the channel because we put amazing dog training information up there, 100% free every single week.



20 Exercises That Help Your Dog Live Longer: Start Today!

00:09:00

You're just going to pick up one of their front paws and hold it. You may find just by picking up the front paw that the dog leans into you, if you, and be very careful doing this with a senior dog, bend their wrist and hold the bottom of their paw, you'll find they won't put their weight on you. But if you're doing this with a senior dog, I'd even add more support by holding their elbow at when you're first doing this.

We don't want the leg lifted way off the ground, at first, it's just an inch. It's getting them to hold their weight all on the other front leg. So, we're offloading that leg. So, at first you might only hold for three seconds. The moment the dog feels uncomfortable, we put the paw down. Give them a rest or go to the other front paw.

00:09:45

You can do this with all four paws on the dog. But I'm telling you, this is really difficult for a lot of dogs. So short duration, short sessions, and revisit it often. Once the dog gets really good at this, you can do diagonal leg lifts where you hold one front paw and the opposite rear. So, if I'm holding the front right, I'll also hold the front left up.

Now I actually teach my dogs to hold, it's easier to do this on the front, to hold one on their own. So, they'll hold their front paw on their own. They'll hold their rear paw on their own. And you can get them to do diagonals as well. That is very creative dog training. Something that also will offload your dog's weight is by teaching them to wave.

00:10:30

Put one paw in the air or wave with both paws. You want that balance on each side. I actually teach my dogs with all four paws, so I number them, one, two, and then the rears are three and four. So those are great exercises to help with your dog's understanding of both proprioception but also offloading to help strengthen one side and create more stability when they happen to be offloading that joint.

One of my favorite warmups for agility and something I start very, very young with my puppies is sidestepping. So, I have them chin rest. That is, they target my hand with their chin, and I want them to step laterally with their body straight. Lateral steps one direction, lateral steps in the opposite direction.

00:11:18

With this exercise, we're looking that the same side rear and front paws move together, so they're not doing one and then the other, they are just sidestepping with their body straight as a unit. Pushups are an easy exercise pretty much anybody can do. It starts with [teaching a dog a stand, a sit, and a down on cue](#). And then you do those in succession.

Either 'sit, down, stand' or 'stand, down, sit.' Any variation of that will help a dog build some strength. Another easy strength and conditioning exercise is a simple bow. And this also can be considered flexibility. So, getting a dog to go into a bow position with their forearms on the ground and their butt in the air, super simple.

00:12:03

You can use a target stick to get that. Super simple exercise, but really beneficial. Our third category *flexibility*. I really only have two things to add for this category. Number one, cookie stretches. So, you could be sitting down for this, your dog's back end between your knees, feed them in front several times, and then you put the cookie on their shoulder, put the cookie on their elbow, put the cookie on their hip, put the cookie on their knee.



00:12:30

So, we're getting them to bend in a, arcing bend towards the cookie and eat the cookie from each of those positions. Helps with flexibility. Again, if we're starting this with an older dog, we might only put the cookie a little bit out in space and just get a slight turn. We're gonna look for, does the dog as flexible one way as they are the other.

Some dogs are way more flexible. My 10-and-a-half-year-old dog Momentum is still flexible enough that she can bend all the way around and rest her head on her own hips. So, your dog doesn't need to be that flexible, but these cookie stretches will help maintain their flexibility. The final flexibility exercise I'm gonna suggest is the big stretch.

00:13:10

Big stretch. Catch your dog stretching in the morning and reinforce them for that. Put a cue on it. You want a genuine stretching the front end and stretching the back end, not just artificial, like a bow is artificial. We want genuine stretch. The big stretch when you know, you know.

Finally, is *conditioning*. Walking, walking where the dog is trotting. These are two different acts, engage two different sets of muscles. Both are very important. If you want to take this to the next level, it can be walking up and down hills. Not a bad exercise for you as well. And depending on the age of the dog walking across hills.

00:13:50

So going up a hill by going across it, going down a hill by going across it. Changes the way the dog carries their weight is super good. Yeah, it's good for all of us. And finally, and to bring back cavalettis, you can do cavalettis with just pool noodles so that it is a lot safer for both puppies and for our senior dogs.

This should just be a fun event. If you want to get serious about it though, as I recommended, seek out the help of a professional to give you the right dimensions for your dog. Remember, for all of these exercises, joy is the criteria. If the dog opts to not play the game, then take it down a level. How can you make this easier?

00:14:32

Start with just one or two exercises and then rotate these great exercises throughout the month until you've established a nice baseline for your dog. So, you can see as your dog gets older, how strong and flexible and conditioned they really still are.

If you want to make mobility a long-term plan for your dog, then I strongly recommend you check out our Home School the Dog and Wag Nation programs. They are not fitness programs, but what they are, are training programs that put a lot of these exercises into videos that teach you step-by-step progressions of them.

00:15:07

Not only are we creating a fitness program we are improving a relationship we are creating connection. We're giving that dog, especially our senior dogs, purpose in their life. Normally those two programs sell for just over \$350, but because you're a listener here on Shaped by Dog, you can get the bundle, the two of them for \$97 for the first six months, and just \$10 a month after that.

If that sounds interesting to you, then just contact my team at wag@dogsthat.com with the subject line 'Home School and Wag Bundle Please.'





Episode: #317

20 Exercises That Help Your Dog Live Longer: Start Today!

00:15:41

So, there you have it, four categories to create more joy in your dog's life. If there's one of these exercises that I mentioned today that's of particular interest to you, jump over to YouTube, leave a comment for me, let me know what it is.

And if there's enough of you that want that same exercises, I have no problem jumping over and doing a tutorial just for you. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Join Wag Nation + Home School the Dog:

Write to us at wag@dogsthat.com with the subject line "Home School and Wag Bundle Please" for a very special opportunity to join us in Wag Nation and Home School the Dog.

ItsYerChoice Summit:

[Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice](#)

Get Crate Games Online:

[Crate Games Online](#)

Resources:

[Susan Garrett's Dog Training Blog: Cutting Your Dog's Nails: How Important Is It Really?](#)

[Podcast Episode 266: Hot Zone And Stays – How One Dog Training Nuance Can Fix Anxiety And Duration.](#)

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

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

[Susan Garrett's Dog Training Blog: How to Train Your Dog to Stand on Cue](#)

[Dogs That YouTube Channel](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Sit. Down. Stand. Stay! Dog Training Duration Behaviors with Susan Garrett](#)



20 Exercises That Help Your Dog Live Longer: Start Today!

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

Website	https://dogsthat.com
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/
TikTok	https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat
LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat
Pinterest	https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/
Twitter	https://twitter.com/susangarrett
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs

