



On Being a Good Dog Training Student



By Susan Garrett

Introduction

This “Good Student Dog Training” series grew from an article I wrote over 15 years ago. I outlined the headings with a small note explaining each - but recently felt inspired to expand and share with the world my thoughts on how being a good student can help you be a better dog trainer; and as a result, ultimately achieve the working relationship with your dogs that I have with my own.

I contemplated many concepts but the question that always came to my mind was this:

Why is it that two people can go to the same dog training workshop or class and not leave with the same information? If learning meant just showing up to class then we would all be Einsteins!

Being a good student involves developing skills you may not have previously considered. I really believe by adopting these concepts you will help maximize every learning opportunity that comes your way. I’m excited to have put them all together to share with you in one place for you to enjoy!

Enjoy the training!



Susan Garrett

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For those of you that are teachers yourselves, be sure to get your own students to go to our website and sign up for our newsletter so they can receive their own copy of “On Being a Good Dog Training Student”.

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Good Student Concept #1

BE Yourself!

Be yourself and embrace the opportunity to make mistakes. Try not to be self-conscious about how “good” you and your dog look in front of the instructor or your peers that may be watching.

We all make mistakes and by exposing your faults you allow the instructor to glean some insight into why you and your dog are having troubles.

All too often people allow their fear of failing or the fear of being embarrassed in front of someone they respect to hold them back from making the most of an opportunity to learn from someone that can help you improve. It might be that you are learning in a group that includes some of your own students. It might be that you have had some past success in the area you are studying, so you feel “pressure” to be brilliant. Whatever the reason. Let go of your ego and allow yourself the privilege of making mistakes.

You don’t need to justify your performance with comments such as:

“I have been away so my dog and I are rusty,” or “I haven’t been sleeping well so my brain is a bit foggy.”



or whatever!

Just be yourself. We are all human. We all make mistakes - it is okay. If you try to put on a performance, your mind will be focused on showing off, and your brain will be closed off from taking in all that is being offered to you. Go to your next seminar with the mindset of learning everything that is available. Don’t even consider what you or your dog look like; just open yourself up to all that is available and allow the learning to come to you.

I leave you with some of my favorite quotes on Failing...

“Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure can be avoided only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and in the end, being nothing.”

~Denis Waitley

“Notice the difference between what happens when a man says to himself, “I have failed three times,” and what happens when he says, “I am a failure.”

~S.I. Hayakawa

And my all time favorite on this subject:

“Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.”

~Robert F. Kennedy



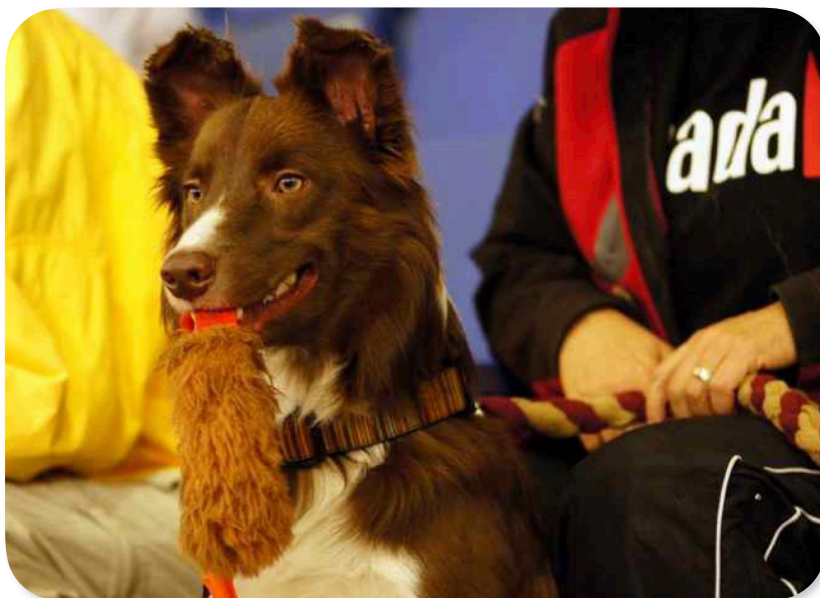
Good Student Concept #2

Be an active listener.

Recently on my blog I wrote about being “present” for your dog and the important people in your life. You can include anyone instructing you in that group of important people that you need to be present for!

It can be challenging when you must juggle focusing on your dog one moment and then changing hats mid-stream to attentively listen to an instructor’s feedback. Ultimately, it is you that is responsible for what you are able to absorb from a class, so when you are getting feedback take your focus away from your dog, but do it without disrespecting the dog.

What I mean by that is, if you just turn to listen to your teacher, your dog can easily misconstrue this sudden lack of attention on your part as a “time out” or punishment.



To prevent this possible misunderstanding you can:

- Toss him a tug toy to occupy his mind and clear up any potential misunderstanding about why you stopped working.
- If he is small enough you can pick the dog up in your arms.
- Have him lie down or, if he knows Crate Games, quickly send him back to his crate for a brief moment.

Whatever you decide, do not try to train or manage your dog while you

are listening to what may be critical feedback about your performance.

None of us can effectively concentrate on more than one thing and hope to fully take ownership of concepts being presented, especially if they are new to you.

By giving your instructor your full, undivided attention you are not only showing her that you are keen to hear what she has to say but you are also setting yourself up to take in the maximum amount of knowledge available to you.

Good Student Concept #3

Try not to be defensive, try to take all of your instructor's input with grace.



In order to improve your skills, your instructor is going to expose your current limitations in your handling or dog training.

Sometimes this can be a blow to your self esteem. Your inner self may feel the need to jump to your defense as someone points out a "flaw" that they have found. This may be particularly difficult if it is happening in a group environment where your theoretical "underbelly" is being exposed in front of your peers, friends, or worse yet, students.

- "Yeah but..."
- "I didn't do that..."
- "That's because..."
- "I tried all that and it won't work for my dog." (My personal favorite!)

These are excuses that will often come out of the mouth of a student that has taken critical feedback as a personal judgement of his or her character. If this is you, try to add a filter between your emotions and your mouth before you go to agility class.

Trigger words may work well to direct a more appropriate response when you feel your muscles tensing because your feelings may have been hurt during an exchange with your instructor.

Try to remind yourself that there is no growth without change. To bring about growth you must be willing to expose your weaknesses in order to transform a challenge of today into one of your strengths of tomorrow. When you feel yourself getting tense in class, whisper the word "growth" to yourself.

Yes, perhaps the delivery of the comment may truly have been harsh or even hurtful! Yes, the instructing would have been more effective presented another way. Perhaps your instructor is having a bad day or perhaps she is on a journey of discovery where instructing is concerned.

But do not let any of that take away the possibilities of you squeezing every learning opportunity available to you. More often than not, there is value somewhere in criticism, regardless of how harsh the delivery may have seemed to you. Find the message that is there for you. Seek out the value without arguing the validity of judgement or the harshness of the delivery.

In order to maximize your education in anything in life we all must be willing to sift through our perceived judgement of an instructor's style and look hard for the lessons that are going to lead us to that growth.

Remember we all had to start somewhere and those who go the furthest are the ones who allow themselves to acknowledge areas where they are not as highly skilled.

If you continually argue with a teacher you will soon shape that instructor into not being as honest with you. No one wants "heated" exchanges with his or her students; that will only result in your instructor only saying "nice" things to you to avoid such altercations.

We all need constructive comments in order to improve. Embrace every opportunity you get to hear yours.

Think about these quotes before your next learning opportunity:

"The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism."

~Norman Vincent Peale

"Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things."

~Winston Churchill

"To avoid criticism do nothing, say nothing and ultimately; be nothing."

~Elbert Hubbard

Good Student Concept #4

Actively try to internally process the concepts being presented by your instructor, but don't be afraid to ask for clarification when needed.

It is important to seek clarification when you are confused and can't take in anymore information because of a major road block to your understanding. Do not be intimidated by the instructor or classmates. Raise your hand and ask a question. However there is a difference between being motivated to ask a question because you are confused and asking a question simply because you found a reason to do so.

Asking for clarity is awesome for two reasons. First of all if you are confused, you need to get help for your own benefit! In addition, your lack of understanding gives feedback to the instructor. It could be that the examples or explanation being used to teach are not as effective as they could be. Your question is potentially exposing that there may have been a break down in your instructor's communication of the concepts.

A challenging, well thought out question from a student may help to expand an instructor's depth of knowledge on a subject matter, or at least encourage the teacher to consider re-evaluating the presentation in order to give clarity to all students.

However, there is a balancing point in this situation. Some students, possibly without knowing it, ask questions as an attention-seeking behaviour. There are other students that interrupt an instructor's flow only to point out conflicting theories between what is been presented and what they heard at a past presenter's workshop.

Before you put your hand up, wait a moment and be certain you really are struggling to follow the concepts being presented (possibly even write down your thoughts first). It may be more appropriate to allow your instructor to carry on with their current train of thought, and perhaps his or her next demo will give you the clarification you require without taking up valuable time with your question.

Just know that every question you ask means you and your classmates will not be presented with as much new information during that session. If an instructor has prepared 50 minutes of material to be presented during a 60 minute class (allowing 10 minutes throughout the class for questions) and the questions turn out to take 25 minutes of the class time -- then simple math tells us we will be cheated out of 15 minutes of learning opportunities.

Sometimes this is necessary and it works well when the extra time is a benefit to more thoroughly learn one particular concept. But there are other times when these questions become an annoyance to your classmates (particularly if the questions are not being asked for reasons of true confusion).

So "Good Student" point number 4 is a double edged suggestion. Be certain to ask your instructor for clarification when necessary, but try to evaluate your own motives for asking prior to raising your hand!

"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing."

~Albert Einstein

"A major stimulant to creative thinking is focused questions. There is something about a well-worded question that often penetrates to the heart of the matter and triggers new ideas and insights."

~Brian Tracy

"Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers."

~Anthony Robbins

Good Student Concept #5

Take responsibility for your dog's errors.

Remember our dogs are only reflections of our abilities as dog trainers. If the dog did not perform as expected, you either didn't train it to fluency or you didn't handle with clarity.

Resist the temptation to be disappointed in or placing blame on the dog when things don't go as planned at home or in front of your instructor.

Dogs do what is reinforcing. There isn't anything more complex to their actions than that. If you trained a behavior in a way that demonstrated to the dog that there is massive reinforcement for him for performing correctly, then the dog will do as expected.

If the competing value of NOT doing the behaviour has proven to be more reinforcing to the dog than actually doing the behaviour, the dog will very likely fail and chose to seek out his reinforcement elsewhere.

Again, not the dog's fault! It is a function of training. You need to understand the ranking of what is rewarding to your dog (see the exercise in my book Ruff Love on ranking reinforcement).

If leaving you to zoom around the room is more valuable to your dog than the bit of kibble you are using as a reward for the sit stay, there will always be a competition with that distraction for your dog while you are training.

The best way to overcome this battle is to:

Build value for behaviours first in a distraction free area. Perhaps you have over-faced your dog by trying to enter a trial too early or working in a seminar at a level beyond your dog's capabilities or with distractions too enticing to your dog's current training level.

When training in the face of high distractions, be certain you are using your dog's highest ranking reinforcement.

Prevent access to any other reinforcement until you can be assured that your dog has learned to love training with you. The more your dog rehearses leaving work to chase other dogs, visit people or just zoom around the ring, the more difficult it will be to convince your dog there are better sources of fun for him in life with you!



Recognize that a dog choosing to leave work to seek out his own reinforcement is a rehearsed behaviour. If it is your desire to train your dog without the use of physical corrections (which is ours) you must become a master of controlling that which reinforces the dog.

“A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame, a little less than his share of the credit.”

~Arnold H. Glasgow

“Blame is just a lazy person's way of making sense of chaos.”

~Doug Coupland

“The highest result of education is tolerance.”

~Helen Keller

“Your circumstances are never as bleak as they may seem when you are in the depth of a moment of disappointment. If your dog is currently choosing distractions over you, be energized by the fact that your dog is a reflection of your ability so change is possible if first you change your current level of understanding.”

~Susan Garrett

Good Student Concept #6

Be open-minded and brave enough to step outside of your comfort zone.



Assuming you are not being asked to try something that would put you or your dog at risk, don't be afraid to try something new. Do not ask your instructor to compare his or her new idea to what you are currently comfortable doing; rather try it for yourself so you may have an educated opinion of your own. Being a good student is about being open to different approaches and suggestions by your instructor/coach.

Now, this doesn't mean you should jump ship from one method to another without consideration of the impact on your current foundation. But rather it means you are open to change, because change is necessary for growth. The goal of excellence in dog training is to always be in a state of perpetual growth.

Your goals should be to always be learning and progressing forward! Get excited about teaching your dogs new things. It is how you improve as a dog trainer, competitor, and handler. This often involves stepping outside of your comfort zone. It is sometimes difficult convincing students to try something new. Life within your comfort zone is . . . well . . . comfortable!

And yes it may be stressful for you out there! Your growth as a trainer can only come from experimenting, trying new things, and daring to take steps into the unknown. Errors in learning create growth in the long run!

In many cases, your own struggles as a student may help teach a preceptive instructor the direction their program should take.

One of my greatest advancements in my dog agility contact training program came from learning from my students. I had a group of exceptional students - they travelled great distances regularly to learn skill sets for their young dogs. Trip after trip I couldn't understand why their dog's nose touch (for contacts) was not nearly what mine was with my young Border Collie Encore.

Remember, I said they were exceptional dog trainers - great students that listened and followed each of the steps of my program. Yet month after month improvement eluded them.

Because that group of exceptional (yet struggling students) were not afraid to show me their weaknesses, those struggles enabled me to alter a good contact training process and turn it into a phenomenal contact

training system! This system is now easily applied by anyone that can follow the now vastly improved step-by-step instructions. There is no problem in dog training that is not solvable - it is your journey to note the challenge, be open minded enough to seek a solution, and be adventurous to try something new.

“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning.”

~ Benjamin Franklin

“One can choose to go back towards safety or forward towards growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.”

~Abraham Maslow

“Move out of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you are willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable while trying something new.”

~Brian Tracy

“If you always do what you've always done you will always get what you always got.”

~Anonymous

“Every moment of one's existence one is growing into more or retreating into less.”

~Norman Mailer

Good Student Concept #7

Realize your learning curve is controlled by how much effort you put in. Take account of where you are now in your dog training and set a goal of where you would like to be in 1 month, 1 year or 3 years.

Do not limit your upward potential with negative thinking like “my dog could never do that.” Likewise, do not limit yourself as a student by assuming you have “heard that before” or that a concept being presented is “just like something you are already doing.”

Allow yourself to be challenged and challenge yourself to try something new in your training.

If you have only ever trained agility, why not train some scent work, just for fun. Or look within your current sport’s behaviours. If you have always trained your dog’s weave poles with a channel, try my innovative 2 x 2 method of weave training. You will never know how much easier or what improvements are possible to what you already have if you are not willing to try something new.

What has always spurred me on to try something new is recognizing the results I got with what I did yesterday are always there for me to fall back on. I know the level of success that is possible (and the limitations that were attached to those old methods). However I don’t know what is possible with something new unless I am willing to give it a try.



Having the “safety net” of yesterday’s methodology should make it easy to try anything that may at first seem radically new to your training.

We all know how easy it is to stay inside our own comfort zone. Even if you don’t want to change a “specific way” you do something, there must be something about your training you’d like to improve upon; like your “timing” in observing, marking and delivering rewards while shaping a behaviour without a prop?

Let me challenge you today to take a small piece of your training and show progress towards a goal. Right now come up with at least the bare bones plan to:

- Improve a current behaviour in your dog that has gotten sloppy.
- Shape a new trick.
- Come up with a plan to stop an unwanted behaviour.
- Change something about your dog’s behaviour that annoys a family member or friend.
- Teach something radically new that is way outside of your comfort zone.

Good kids enjoying recess!



Identify something you'd like to improve in your training - just one thing so you can put "effort in" and gain a new perspective on trying something new.

Something new requires only paying attention to your inner voice; it starts as a "seed" that whispers to you, "I'd like to try that." Research then follows, organizing your thoughts into a plan, then taking the first step in your training. Your effort in today can be about researching or planning or the actual training of what you already know.

Remember, effort spent in the planning stages maximizes training efficiency, making transitions smooth and minimizing any confusion or miscommunication between you and your dog.

My day begins every morning making a list of the things I want to

accomplish, learn, and complete in a day; it's the seeds of my thoughts. This could include ongoing research into learning more about just about anything! These past few weeks for me I have been focused on learning everything I could about raising a singleton puppy! Learning is contagious!

Planning, organizing, and getting excited about a new project drives my learning but also my students' training. Once I have the seeds, my planning then becomes the roadmap to my training, which in order to be productive needs to be purposeful.

Purposeful training is about being organized, having a plan, and executing it with laser focus.

Challenge yourself to try something new today! Research, plan, train, document and then show off!

Effort in = Progress forward

"Be curious, not judgmental."

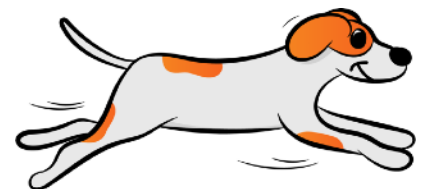
~ Walt Whitman

"How am I going to live today in order to create the tomorrow I am committed to?"

~Anthony Robbins

"You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."

~ Mahatma Gandhi



Good Student Concept #8

The best way to really know an exercise is to teach it yourself.



To be absolutely clear you understand a new skill, verbalize it to yourself. Pretend that you are the teacher and you are instructing yourself in the exercise. If you run into difficulties with this visualization, ask the “real” instructor for clarification. (If “you the student” starts to argue with “you the instructor,” you may have bigger problems than just dog training!)

I’ve shared with all of you over my last few projects how important visualization is for me. I practice it in everything I do from simple training tasks to complicated world class agility runs. I’ve been using visualization for most of my 40+ years in sports. I presently use it to surround myself with good thoughts in my everyday life.

Make a mental movie of yourself and your training before you get your canine partner into the mix. Remember: pretend you are the teacher explaining it to a student. Then become that student!

Pattern a smooth experience, deal with any struggles you have through your visualization as well as celebrating a fabulous outcome. Start at the beginning, organizing your training; where are you? How does the floor feel under your feet? Is there anyone in the room with you? What is the energy you have about you?

Surround yourself with a positive outlook. Look at your visualization from a few perspectives; physically doing the training/handling, taking instruction, watching yourself from above and, my favorite, as a commentator of the training being done.

Seeing all the perspectives can help you smooth out the whole process. Visualize teaching the process to an entire group of students. This exercise helps you articulate each step, allowing you to “own the process” as you help your brain be engaged in the steps you are about to try! My best students visualize and then do a mock run before getting their dog out!

Take a skill you have been struggling with; perhaps the timing of a threadle arm in agility or the pivot to send your dog on a send away or a glove exercise in obedience. Now try and teach it to yourself. I think you will find one of two things will happen; either the entire process will become very clear and with clarity comes confidence, or you will have big blank spots where you are unsure or confused and that will give you the details of the question you need to ask your instructor to further your education.

Give it a try, I know you will be blown away at how well it works!

“Teaching is the highest form of understanding.”

~Aristotle

“Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.”

~Chinese proverb

“Memorization is what we resort to when what we are learning makes no sense.”

~Anonymous

“It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning.”

~Claude Bernard

“Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one’s self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance learn so easily; and why older persons, especially if vain or important, cannot learn at all.”

~Thomas Szasz

“Our best chance for happiness is education.”

~Mark VanDorn

“Education’s purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”

~Malcom S. Forbes

Good Student Concept #9

Be learning focused rather than image focused. Avoid putting yourself down or allow yourself to be the target of other student's or your teacher's jokes.

An old trick of someone that views themselves as being inferior to their peers is to put themselves down before others have a chance to do it first. You see this play out with some overweight kids or those that may view themselves as intellectually inferior to the kids around them. I know I myself used to do it when playing a sport with someone who obviously put in more hours of practice in than I had.

Then I realized what I was doing, by putting myself down I was sabotaging my own potential.

I see this when I teach, especially if there is a perceived "superstar" student in the group. There will be someone or a group of people that put on a self proclaimed "dunce hat" in response to the super ability they are witnessing. They make jokes about theirs or their dogs' lack of ability.

It is often done in a jovial sometimes hilarious form. Poking fun of your size, your inability to run, your dog's lack of skills etc. However, even though your words are lighthearted and you know you are "just kidding." There are three reasons I would encourage you to eliminate this habit from your learning environment.

1. You are rehearsing for your self conscience the exact role you should be playing when you are dog training. Are you a person that wants to grow and learn or are you someone that is "realistic" and knows there is little possibility for someone like you to improve your skills? Even though on a conscious level you realize you are not a "moron" your sub-conscious mind does not understand "joking." Each put down you inflict on yourself is building a self image of who you are when you train a dog.
2. If you are in fact funny or harsh when you put yourself down, you will earn the reinforcement of laughter or "rallying" from the group. Reinforcement builds behaviour so you will happily fall back into this role any time you are in another group learning situation.
3. When you put yourself down you are establishing a working relationship with your instructor. By setting yourself up to be the "class clown" or "village idiot" you are indicating you recognize your improvement is doubtful. Your role in class is one to provide entertainment. Inadvertently you will end up getting less coaching



from your instructor than some of the other students. Once you have established this role it is difficult to change. Sit down and have a talk with your teacher is the best way to initiate the necessary change.

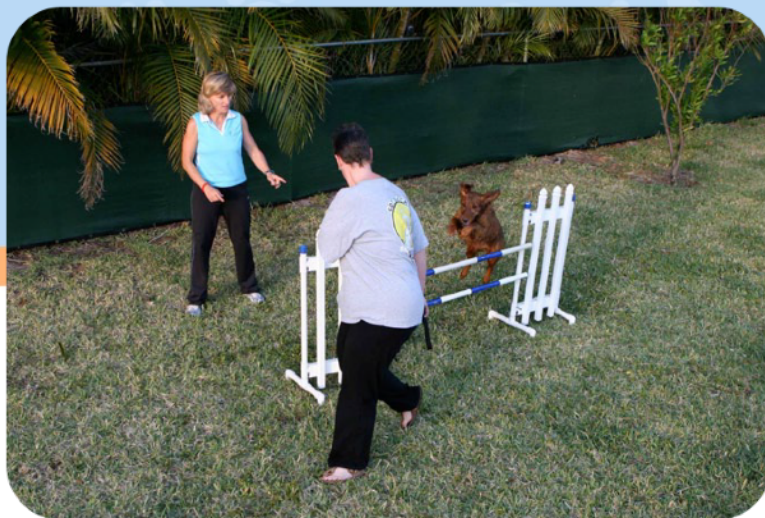
According to education expert Carol Dweck (1986) there are two types of students. There are those that are;

A. Learning oriented. Those students that earnestly want to learn and improve their competency in a subject.

OR

B. Image oriented: Students whose focus is on not wanting to look bad or put their efforts into how their intelligence or talents they appear to others that are watching.

Confident students enjoy the process.



If you are an image oriented student your focus will be less on what is being presented and more on how you are executing it.

If you have been allowing yourself to fall into the role of class clown or the talentless one in your group, you may notice you will learn considerable more in a private lesson while working one on one with your instructor. Of course to some extent we all do. You are getting the instructor's undivided attention plus more repetitions in a private lesson so it makes sense learning would be improved. But that isn't all that is at play here.

For the class clown, in a private lesson the reinforcement (of the group laughing or supporting your self ridicule) is gone. In addition the instructor is less likely to join in as without a "posse" of other students a joke now appears more like an insult.

Your learning will be accelerated in a one on one setting but that doesn't mean you are destined only to learn through more expensive private

lessons. Start fresh at your next group class and tell your closest friends you have had a change of heart and for them to please help you change your role.

It may also be necessary to speak to your teacher. If you are an instructor or another student in class with a student or classmate like this, subtly try to change their direction by not engaging in their put downs. Make an extra effort to point out all that is great about their performance. It will make a change for the better for everyone involved if the entire group is focused on a more productive learning environment.

This doesn't mean there shouldn't be plenty of laughter in class. It just means this laughter shouldn't be directed at a person or a dog's lack of ability. Enjoy yourself, be lighthearted but most of try to become more "learning oriented" where you allow your true self to fail without feeling the need to apologize or justify your slip up to anyone.

You were not born a winner, and you were not born a loser. You are what you make yourself be.

~ Lou Holtz

Self-image sets the boundaries of individual accomplishment.

~Maxwell Maltz

The easiest time to cure an illness is before it is accepted as a part of the self-image.

~Jane Roberts

The person we believe ourselves to be will always act in a manner consistent with our self-image.

~Brian Tracy



Good Student Concept #10

Be learning focused rather than image focused. Avoid putting yourself down or allow yourself to be the target of other student's or your teacher's jokes. Plan, record keep (note pad and/or video) and have purposeful practice sessions between lessons.

Attending a weekly class or an occasional workshop will do little to improve your dog training skills unless you are rehearsing your new skills at home in between. But as important as home training is, it can be precious time wasted unless you are practicing effectively.

Set up a video on a tripod near your work (or near the instructor if it is a private lesson) or ask someone else to take notes (ideally have both the notes and the video). Review or re-write these notes each night. Email someone to tell them what you learned.

My role as your instructor is to guide you in planning your sessions. Your role is to execute the training with your dog.

One of my observations is how quickly students disregard the importance of planning. So often when I am teaching, even before I've even completed the instruction for the assignment, I see students get their dogs out only to stand around aimlessly as their owners contemplate their next move.

No planning for the session, no considering the best "H" or training habitat (location), no reward of choice, no arousal of dog, no arousal of self, a lack of tools such as a note book, pen,

or any props and often even missing a toy or food to reinforce the dog are all contributors to your lack of sustained success.

Nothing takes away from a potentially great session like disorganization. Organizing yourself before getting the dog will help you to create a training session that is brilliant. A simple concept, but such a important part of our program.

At Say Yes, once planning is in the forefront of our students mind, the next layer we have them focus upon is their transitions into and out of the dog training. Executing a GREAT transition; from the Crate to the training area and back to the crate at the end will grow your trained behaviours and training relationship with your dog exponentially!

Transitions into and out of Training or Handling:

- Playing Crate Games opens the door to a phenomenal session. A

release to you followed by tugging while you head closer to your work location. The game sit-tug-sit shows some control while evaluating arousal (as described in Ruff Love). All interactive with you. Full attention by you en route to training.

- Now you start each session with your dog's focus on you, your planning in place, and you are prepared with all of your training tools & rewards; you can smoothly transition out of play and into training (as you wrote in your plan).
- By creating VALUE for training with you (through planning and executing effective transitions) you will minimize errors. Your dog now won't have a chance to become distracted, sniff the ground or run off to chase a bird because he is totally engaged by you!
- Organizing yourself before the training will result in a more effective and efficient training session with far fewer errors.



Susan Garrett's Planning Challenge

I would like to challenge you to plan your training for even as little as three sessions in a row. I know it will take longer to get ready for your training but you will be amazed at how much more productive your training will be over those three sessions.

Swagger ... the Teacher's Pet.

Planning Your Training

Set the stage for a successful session first; what is your goal? Write it down. Where is your notebook and how will you use it? Will someone record keep for you, will you do it on the fly, or will you write notes immediately after your dog has been put away? Where are your reinforcements and how will you hold them? Deliver them? How will you keep track of time; with a timer that beeps at you or a stop watch to refer to once you end your session? Is your video camera set up and when will it get turned on? Your plan should also include things such as: Where will you train? What distractions will you allow? (I plan almost all of my failures, not leaving them to chance.) When will you plan on breaking up the session with a game of tug? How you will get your dog "up" for the session before you begin? (This is a seldom considered but very important aspect of training. Never allow your dog to start his training session "flat.") How will you transition out of this game into your task to train?

Train for only a set period of time; it can be as little as 30 seconds or as long as 5 minutes but no longer.

Record keep the rewards as well as the number of times your dog gave you unwanted responses or left his work entirely. What worked? What do you need to change?

Bob Bailey suggests you ask yourself this question after every training session; Am I better off now than I was before my training session? If the answer is "no," change what didn't work. If the answer is "I am not sure," go back and repeat what you just did until you are sure. If the answer is yes and it is always yes then you are not challenging your dog enough and are wasting valuable training time and reinforcements.

Write a plan of action what you learned and what your goal will be the next time you train that behaviour.

If you do take me up on this training challenge, let me know how it goes by dropping me a line on my Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility) or my blog (www.susangarrettdogagility.com) let me know how it worked for you. If record keeping is already part of your routine, tell me what works best or how you organize it all.



By sharing, we don't just help each other, we help ourselves ten fold.

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now"

~Alan Lakein

"He who fails to plan, plans to fail"

~Proverb Quote

"Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning"

~Thomas Edison

"Proper preparation prevents poor performance"

~Charlie Batch

"It is not deeds or acts that last; it is the written record of those deeds and acts"

~Elbert Hubbard

"Errors using inadequate data are much less than those using no data at all."

~Charles Babbage

Good Student Reminders:

The following is a "Quick Reference" check-list to give you some last minute reminders before you go to your next dog training lesson. Some of these suggestions may be minor tweaks to what you have always done in the past, while others may represent a major shift to your thinking. It may work best to just focus on one or two of these pointers at first in order to internalize each idea and make it your own. Before you know it, this entire list will be second nature and you will be maximizing every opportunity in front of a dog training instructor!

- ✓ **Be yourself...**
Don't be afraid to make mistakes!
- ✓ **Be an active listener...**
Don't try to manage your dog while the instructor is speaking!
- ✓ **Be open to your instructor's input...**
Don't be defensive!
- ✓ **Give yourself a moment to digest new information...**
But don't be afraid to ask for clarification if needed!
- ✓ **Take responsibility for your dog's errors...**
Your dog's skills are a reflection of your abilities as a trainer!
- ✓ **Be open-minded...**
Don't be afraid to try something new!
- ✓ **Set goals...**
Your learning curve is a direct result of how much effort you put in!
- ✓ **Visualize teaching yourself an exercise...**
If you run into problems, ask the instructor for clarification!
- ✓ **Be learning-focused rather than image-focused...**
Don't be afraid of judgment from your peers or instructor!
- ✓ **Plan and record-keep (note pad and/or video)...**
Practice your new skills between lessons!

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>