

How to Create Kid Friendly Dogs and Dog Friendly Kids

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Imagine you had a relative that had to move in with you for a length of time and every time he'd see you, he'd like to like sneak up on you and then jump on your back. Or pick you off your feet and give you the one of those big bear hugs that squeezed your intestines and kind of swung you around, or maybe he'd pull your hair or do one of those three stooges routines.

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You know? Like, "w w w wise guy eh!" Poking you right in the eye. Could you imagine, like you would start to want to avoid him, right? And that avoidance would quickly escalate somewhere North of anger. Sadly, that's kind of a life a lot of dogs have to live when they're raised in a home with kids. But it doesn't have to be that way.

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It can all be far more harmonious with just a little bit more understanding and education. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. And today we're talking kids and dogs. And before you turn away and say, "Hey, hey, hey I don't have any kids." If you've got a dog and you have friends with kids, you're going to want to listen to this podcast and send it on to them.

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But before we get too far down the road, I want to ask you to join— If you're watching this on YouTube, I'd like you to join my puppy, This! in hitting the like button. And if you haven't, please subscribe to the podcast. And if you're listening to this on your phone or look for the three dots on your phone, that will lead you to a subscribe button somewhere.

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That's the only way we get feedback. Subscribes, likes, comments, reviews. That's the only way that we're getting feedback on how you're liking the podcast that the team and I are putting together. Okay. Let's get down to today's topic. And I thought it would be fitting since we're talking about kids, I start by reading a podcast review, partially given by a six-year-old. Stick with me. Let's do what I mean.

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Okay. This comes from Veronica. It says, "Hello Susan and team. We're getting a mini-Dachshund in February. He's our family's fifth Dachshund over the years. We're so excited. I'm listening to the podcast in the car and this afternoon I picked up my six-year-old daughter Esmé. She was quiet in the back seat until we were nearly home.

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When she leaned in to tell her brother, "We are listening to this to make Charlie be the best dog and we all have to train him, not just mommy. And he won't know what to do if we don't teach him. And we have to teach him to come to us when he needs to go potty." I nearly cried. She gets it. Thank you for your podcast. We all really enjoy them." Thank you, Veronica. And thank you Esmé for actually recording that message for us. That is so cool.



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I, you know, don't have kids on my own. So, you're going to say, "Well, what authority do you have to give me advice on kids and dogs?" You may know that I was raised in a family with eight brothers and sisters. From those eight brothers and sisters, I have somewhere upwards of 40 nieces, nephews, and great nieces and nephews. Are they called grand nieces and nephews? I'm not sure, but I'm surrounded by kids a lot and I absolutely adore kids. And obviously you guys know what I feel about dogs.

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And so, I believe having a dog in a house with kids is just an— or can be an awesome combination. Because it allows kids to learn some hugely important life lessons, hugely important life lessons. Like, I mean, as we are all being shaped by dogs. And so, it's critical though, as the adults in the household that we navigate those lessons in a way that help create the best relationship possible for the dog and the children in your house, as well as the best relationship possible for not only you and the dog, but more importantly, you and your children.

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True story. I was watching a professional dog trainer once with their, I think he was about a 12-year-old boy. And the 12-year-old was playing with her dog. And she turned and scolded her son and say, "Don't you bond with that dog!" And it made me a little sad and I looked at her and I said, "what what's going on?"

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She said, "Well, you know, I find my dogs bond with my kids so much easier than me." But that, by saying, by scolding your kid, you're putting a wedge between them and that's just not necessary. So, let's make sure that we create harmony with everyone so that the best situation possible happens. But it starts with being aware of what you're expecting of the dog.

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So, my mentor Bob Bailey, I'm sure I've mentioned this great quote by Bob Bailey. He says the problem in animal training is we expect far too much of the animal and far too little of us. So, a lot of times parents just expect dogs to behave. Expect to, for a dog to be okay being grabbed by the ear even if there's an infection. That they're going to be okay being grabbed by the tail or a kid jumping on their back or flopping down on them and giving them a big hug or coming right up to their face and looking them, you know, googly-eyed or squeezing the sides of their face.

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A lot of times parents just expect that if you're going to be a dog in this household, then you have got to learn to be okay with this. And that's unfair because we all should have the right to say, "I'm uncomfortable with what's going on." Dogs included.

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Because what lessons are you teaching your kids if that isn't the case? We're teaching the kids that we can bully anything or anybody we want to. They just need to play our game. That's okay. You know there's a lot of things that kids pick up on and we don't even realize, which is why I had a good friend of mine. They got a puppy and against my better recommendation, they sent this puppy away to be trained somewhere else.



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And the training they use food, but they also use corrections. So, when they got this 12-week-old puppy back, what they had to do is they had to go in and learn how to correct the dog. Because they had never had a dog before.

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So, they learned how when they said sit and the puppy didn't sit, they popped it on the collar. And if it didn't down when they said they popped it down. And they had at the time a five-year-old and a seven-year-old and I said, "You are establishing that if something's weaker, it's okay to be tough and physical with them to get them to do what we want."

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And I don't think I know these people that the kindest people I've ever met in my life. And I know that's not the kind of lessons that they wanted to establish for their kids. And side note to this, 10 days after they got this dog back, the stress and anxiety of the situation was complicated because somebody that they, the dog didn't know was left in the house alone with it, left the door open and the dog ran away and was gone for hours. Happy ending, the dog was found and happier ending, I took the dog for a month and did some training with him.

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Okay. So, having the right outcomes with kids and dogs starts with having the right expectations. And this is a great idea that somebody on our team, Laura M. Shout out to Laura, when I asked her the question about, you know, she's got these great kids and that great relationship with the dog, and I asked her for some of her thoughts and what she did, and she said it really starts with family agreements.

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So, this is the first thing I would encourage you to think about. And I'm just going to add to some of this. So, what are the family agreements? Now, if you're listening to this podcast, chances are that you want to train your dog in a system based in kindness and understanding that the dog is doing the best they can with the education that you've given them in the environment that you're asking them to do whatever you've asked them to do.

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And that's a lesson we need to help the children to understand that a dog is doing the best they can. So, I've written down five agreements here. So, the first one would be you have to agree on what the kids are allowed to call the dog. Because if you have, like if you have kids that are 10 years or older, they should understand or should be able to comprehend when you say, "You ask a dog to do something once and you don't repeat the cue."

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Go back to [episode number 13](#), where I talked about how cues get poisoned. So, kids— and I hate to say an age because kids mature at different rates. So, you might have a 12-year-old that you have to have different rules with than a five-year-old. But if you tell a child, "Well, this dog's name is Charlie." then chances are every other word out of that kid's mouth's going to be Charlie. Charlie, Charlie, Charlie, Charlie, Charlie. And so, it might need to have an agreement that you're going to call the dog puppy. Pup-pup. Unless you have the passkey, which is a treat.



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And then you can say his name once, but you have to give him a treat right after. So, an agreement like that. Agreement on how words are going to be used, and you might want to give the dog a nickname that the kids can use while you use the proper name until the kids understand. So, agreement number two would be about around rewards and food.

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And how the dog isn't going to get food from the table and the dog isn't going to get human food and the dog's going to get you know, we're going to set aside the rewards for the dog at the beginning of the day. And these are how we're going to give them out. You know it's important to get buy in from the kids to help, you know, maybe even sit down— Even little Esmé who's six, I would sit down with a six-year-old and say, "Here's what I want to do. These are my thoughts."

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And, you know, let them have some say in it at the end of the day you can say, "Well, these are great ideas, and we'll think about them for next time. But today this is what we're going to do." Number one, your agreement is the words. Number two are the food and the rewards. Number three would be how we show affection to a dog and explain that long body strokes are really good ways to show affection. Hugging and putting your face next to your dog's face, poking and pulling tails and pulling it. Like these or smacking, these aren't great ways of showing affection. Unless you're doing it in a game of tug and the dog's tugging, and then you're smacking them. That's fun.

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Okay. So, number three is how we show affection. Number four is going to be what's your role when I train. Now, if you have a four-year-old there's different roles that you can assign, but the most important thing that I'm going to say here is the family agreement is that the adults train the dogs. Once a skill has been taught, then we bring the kids into help with the training.

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But at first, it's got to be that the adults train the dogs. All right. That's so important because it's going to exponentially improve the rate that the dogs are going to learn. You know, I'm just going to take a side trip here because I remember, you know, I see this on television all the time where people get a family pet and they tell the ten-year-old, "Okay, it's your responsibility to train it. And to bath it, and to walk it, and to feed it, and to—" Come on. Let's not overwhelm the kids. Let's be fair.

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Number five would be the transitions. So, when we're going to dinner, we're going to have our dog go in the hot zone. When we're going outside, we're going to have the dog go in the hot zone because that's a consistent place where the dog can know what's expected of them.

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And the hot zone, I've talked about this before. It's an extension of crate games and it's, the dog has a spot, a mat, a bed where they understand I need to be here to get rewards. And for your best benefit to stay out of trouble. So, there we have some family agreements and included in that I would talk about be kind. Be kind in your actions and be kind in your word. And that's just a great life lesson for kids to learn. Right?



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What does that mean to be kind? And so that would be the first thing we do. Now we're going to talk about what are the critical lessons I think you absolutely have to have if you have kids in your house. Number one would be [ItsYerChoice](#).

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And if you go to the show notes, you will see a link to ItsYerChoice. That is the first game that every households got to have. Because dogs need to know if there's toddlers going around the house, they can't just eat the cookies out of their hands. That if the kid throws food off of their highchair, that's not free game.

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Now you could decide at the end of the meal to tell the dog, "Okay, you can clean up the floor." But you need to do that on cue. Because if you don't do it on cue, you're telling them if you find food, you can have it. Well, they're going to find food in your kid's hand next week, and you're not going to like that. So, make sure they stay in the hot zone and you teach ItsYerChoice and they are told when they can do cleanup on aisle, highchair. All right.

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So, I would say ItsYerChoice definitely, crate games definitely because that helps lead you into the hot zone the bring me behavior. The bring me behavior is critical because kids, dogs pick up kid's toys. And if you start chasing them, they're going to run off. They'd pick up dirty socks and underwear. If you start chasing them, it's going to be, it's just going to be chaotic. Kids running, kids screaming, "He's got my favorite toy!" And the dog's having fun. So, bring me.

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Anything my puppy, she's four months old, she picks something up I say, "Bring me!" boom it's in my hand. So, ItsYerChoice, bring me, those two games you can get in [Home School the Dog](#). There's a lot of games actually. You can get Home School the Dog, that would be a massive benefit. For these games, ItsYerChoice and bring me, crate games isn't in there, but hot zone is. So, you can get ItsYerChoice, hot zone, and bring me, they're all in **Home School the Dog**. If you're not in Home School the Dog and you'd want to, it is like \$300 if you go to our website.

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However, if you send a note to my team and say, subject line: "[Home School the Dog I was listening](#)" My team, I promise you, we'll give you a ridiculously good offer. And I'm going to tell them this after I'm done this podcast. A ridiculously good opportunity to join **Home School the Dog**. I just thought of that because I'm looking at these games, you can get them all in Home School the Dog.

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So those are the things that are critical. And so, you know, a lot of times people like to play retrieve with the dog. Well, a better game for, if you've got kids is just drop it. So, tell your children that they can drop a toy and then tell the dog, bring me. That's of course after you've taught them bring me. So, it's not the dog running because sometimes the kid's throw is bad and all of a sudden, the dog's on your table breaking Grandma's china. You don't want that. So just dropping the toy and the dog can pick it up and put it in their hand.



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Rather than playing like if it's a young child playing tug might not be good because the leverage of the dog swinging your kid, hitting Grandma's china is not a good plan. So rather than playing tug, they can play game like hiding a toy and letting the dog find it and then the dog brings it back. So, those are more productive ways that they can interact. Okay.

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Training. This is the biggie. I want the kids to be involved, but I want you to do the training at least initially, depending on the age of the kids of course. If the kids are old enough, you can do a little bit, and then they can do a little bit. But one of the life lessons that are great that we can teach these kids, our kids— our kids? My kids have four legs, but I still teach them, is how to be a goal setter. And so, when you're training, you're going to start with a plan.

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And then you're going to tell your kids, "Okay, here's my plan. And here's what I'd like you to do. I'd like you to count how many cookies I give the dog. And I'd like to count how many times the dog failed or tried and didn't get a cookie." So now we've got the kids involved. Now, if your kids are too young for that, they might be in a playpen watching, and you're going to go in and celebrate with them during balance breaks.

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If you don't know what balance breaks are, check out [episode 57](#). So, you've got your plan. You're going to manipulate the environment, dig into [episode number 6](#) so that you get success with the behavior training, you set up a video, so use your phone so that you can video your session. And then you're going to train your dog. And then you're going to review the video and see all the amazing things and just take notes for the next time. And so, you involve your kids because you're going to tell them, "Well, we're going to video because that's how you improve any mechanical skill."

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So, if you're playing baseball, you need to video your swing. You need to video how you throw. So, if you've got your kids around, "Hey, I'll video you training and then you video me training." So, it's great way to involve the kids in what you're doing. Most important thing is you've got to know what's age appropriate or maturity level appropriate for the kids. Because we want the kids to learn to have respect for dogs. All right.

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And if you are listening to this, remember people are for hugging, dogs are for patting, praising and rewarding. All right. And it's super important especially as our dogs get older, because a geriatric dog, they're going to have a huge startle reflex. They're going to have more pain than the average dog. So, we need kids to leave the dogs alone. When dogs are eating guys, you got to keep away from them. You've got to leave them alone. So, respect for dogs is so important.

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And finally, you can include the kids in day-to-day responsibilities, like feeding the dog. Like if they're old enough, they can scoop the kibble in a bowl if you feed a kibble. If you feed raw, you might prepare that and then let the children just dole them out to the dogs or dog that you have. Walking the dog, they can be part of that. I encourage you to help them, to have them be part of the poop cleanup.



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You shouldn't be responsible for that as part of owning a dog, even if they're just counting them as you scoop them up into your scooper. All right. So, grooming and bathing and nail trimming, things like that. Brushing your dog's teeth daily. It's great to involve your kids in all of that, in all of that.

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Okay. The bottom line is guys that we as adults need to be the best advocate for our dogs. Those relationships can grow intentionally, but it requires you having a plan. It requires you sitting down these family agreements. And I would suggest you review these agreements daily at the dinner table. So, we know what one went well for you today. And at the end of the week, celebrate as a family. Let's celebrate the agreements that we did because you know, you might say, "What kind of a family pet do we want and are we on the right track?" All right. So, start talking about that and celebrate as a family. Because if a dog fails then we failed.

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Right. And that's another valuable lesson that we can teach the kids. That the dogs are never bad because they made a mistake. They just didn't understand what we expected. And so, what can we do differently to help our dogs have a better understanding? That's the best lesson you can teach your children because then when they have a co-worker that disappoints them, they're not going to think that co-worker's a jerk. They're going to say, "How could I have communicated my expectations better to you? Because I seem to have been disappointed with this outcome." Right.

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Instead of getting angry at someone, they are saying, "Wow. Okay well, what, where was our misunderstanding? And let's see how we can make it better for all of us." If you haven't subscribed, please subscribe.

And I got a question, one final question for you. Do you consider yourself a helpful person? If you do, I'd love for you to help me out by sharing this podcast with anyone you know who has kids and dogs in the house. Let's make life better for everybody. And let's help grow relationships between kids and dogs intentionally and not by accident. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 25: Why All Dogs Can Bite and How to Reduce the Risk with R.E.A.D.](#)

[Podcast Episode 19: One of My Biggest Pet Peeves in Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 13: Naming Your Puppy or Dog](#)

[Blog Post: A GAME to Preserve Your Dog's Recall Cue](#)

[Game: Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice \(IYC\)](#)

[Crate Games Online](#)

Susan's Team: wag@dogsthat.com

[Podcast Episode 57: Why Balance Breaks Fast Track Your Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 6: The Art of Manipulation](#)



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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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