

## Dog Muzzles: Everything You Need To Know And How To Muzzle Train Dogs

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG Since you're listening to this podcast there's a very good chance you are a lot like me and love investing your time in teaching your dog a new training game that's going to deepen the bond you have with your dog. Grow that trust, build your dog's confidence and give your dog a new skill set that they will benefit from moving forward. If that's you, you are in the right place today.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And today I'm going to teach you my approach to creating a **positive conditioned emotional response** to something very particular. And the growing of the CER will help deepen that bond you have with your dog, increasing the trust the dog has in you. It will grow your dog's confidence and give them a great new skillset. And it is a skillset that your Veterinarian is going to thank you for.

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And if you haven't guessed it by now, which I don't know how you would have, I am talking about creating an amazing positive conditioned emotional response to the sight of, and your dog wearing a muzzle. Now before you click away let me just say, this is a really cool training exercise. So, if you have zero plans on ever putting on a muzzle on your dog, you are going to want to at least listen to what I have to say. And I think this exercise is an invaluable investment of your time and efforts for every dog owner.

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Why would anyone want to wear a muzzle? Well first of all dogs who are fearful and are put into situations like going to a Veterinarian or potentially a groomer, or maybe even a chiropractor have a much higher probability of biting somebody. Now before you say, "Oh no, Susan, Susan, that's not my dog. My dog would never do that. My dog's not fearful. My dog would never bite somebody."

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Let me just remind you. We, none of us can predict our behavior when our emotions kick in. That's the nature of emotions. It's an unconscious response. Emotions tell our body prepare to take action. So, you know, if somebody comes around the corner and scares you and you jump, they don't go, "Okay, why did you jump?" "Well, I, I couldn't control myself. My body just acted a certain way under this stimulus."

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So, there's this still this belief by many people that when dogs get fearful, and they snap and snarl that they are behaving badly because of their background in their dog training. And it really isn't, there's a difference between a dog making a choice 'I'm going to try and leave.' and a dog saying 'My emotions are overtaking me. I am not thinking with the forefront of my brain.' That's the conscious mind. 'It's just a response from my back brain.' The lizard brain.

The emotions are saying you can't get out of here, be prepared, bam, bam, bam. And that's where people get bit.



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So, we're going to avoid all that. We're going to avoid the possibility of it, plus you and I, we're going to learn a really fun game. Okay. I'm not learning, I'm actually teaching it. I'm going to teach you a really, really fun game that I promise you it's going to be a great investment of your time. And if nothing else, you're going to set up a situation where we're deepening your dog's understanding of consent in training.

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Now I've spoken about consent and training in podcast [episode 106](#). I also more recently spoke about it in podcast [episode 107](#) when I was talking about trimming your dog's nails and getting consent from your dog, getting buy-in because that kind of training deepens your trust.

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And quite honestly, I built that [consent into everything](#) that I do with my dogs. I have what I call a [game on position](#). If the dog doesn't adopt this game on position, they're telling me "I really don't, I'm not digging this game." So, I don't move forward with that. So, by playing what I've got for you today, even if you say I'm never going to put a muzzle on my dog ever, you deepen your dog's understanding that they have the opt out button always available.

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All right. But let's get back to why would you want to use a muzzle? So, first one as I said, any dog even the most stable dog when they're fearful could bite. Swagger, my dog Swagger stable dog, but he was in pain. He got his arm caught in an ex-pen one day and he bit me.

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So, fear is number one. Number two some countries in Europe, it's the law that you have to put a muzzle on your dog to walk down the street. So, if you and "Yeah ... Susan, I'm never going to Europe." Okay. Maybe this doesn't apply to you but stick with me. I've got more. So, if you do live in one of those countries or you're planning on visiting one of those countries, what if you just got there and they say, "Hey, you can't take your dog down the street without a muzzle on." And now you've got to slap this muzzle on your dog. And he's like— "Oh crap. The dog's freaking out. I didn't know I had to do this. This is just awful."

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So, fear, it's the law. Or your dog might bite [at the Veterinarians](#) or the groomers or the chiropractor simply because of their age. Like a geriatric dog they're not in the right frame of mind all the time, or they might be going blind and not see what's going on. And they might just snap out of fear. So, age definitely can provoke the poor response from the dog.

And just general pain, any dog in pain will use their mouth inappropriately and it isn't a conscious thought.

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So it could be like catastrophic pain, you know, something horrible happened to the dog. Nothing like that's happening to any of our listeners. Or it could be something as simple, like your dog broke a nail and that nail's hanging off and the Veterinarian has to get in there and cut it off. Yikes! It would be so much safer for everybody involved, the veterinarian, the hospital team, everybody including you, if we had a cue that when you said that word, your dog is going to go wham "Yes, I want in."



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So today I'm going to share with you not only the three stages, the process that I use to condition a muzzle, I'm also going to share an idea of what muzzle you might want to choose, which ones you might want to avoid.

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And finally, I'm going to share a very unique cue that you might want to use to teach your dog to put a muzzle on. If you already have a dog that will muzzle up, you might even want to change your cue. Stick with me. I think you'll like it. Okay. Types of muzzles. There's all kinds of muzzles. Most Veterinarians would use something that's pretty simple like this, it's just a nylon muzzle.

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Now honestly a dog can get incisor bites with this on you know, depending on how tight it is. They might not be able to open their mouth. But most that Veterinarian clinics, they'll put something like that on the dog. And you could go and use one of these. The challenge I have with these as a normal muzzle is that the dog can't get their mouth open if they wanted to take a drink. You can't reinforce them while they're wearing the muzzle. So that makes it really, really difficult to create a conditioned emotional response to wearing it. Because I mean it's not impossible, but it makes it really, really difficult.

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So, I wouldn't start with this and actually if the Veterinarian puts it on once they've been used to wearing these, it probably be a go, okay. But that's not where I'd start. Okay. Next up we have these plastic muzzles, and you can get these for like \$20 off of Amazon. They come with this strap that goes between the eyes.

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Now I would take that off depending on why you have a muzzle on your dog. It will help keep it on better. So, if there's a chance your dog might get jumped or might do some jumping, let's work on that. Let's work on that separately, but you should keep that on. All right.

So, you can see this is a muzzle that has been used around here quite a bit, and we've put moleskin in there.

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So, one of my students' dogs, it's their muzzle and that kind of protects his nose because he wears it when he's out running with my dogs. All right. And he's not a huge threat but it's just an insurance thing and you can see she's actually got her husband to cut the bar out from here. So, he could do incisor bites if he wanted to. But this isn't like, this is a real threat.

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I also want you to consider. I love the clips, these metal clips where you, it takes a little bit more time to thread that through and securely hookup the muzzle. This is another type of clip here where like it's got a clip-clip, which something else you have to condition. And also, I mean I can't break that apart but there's a chance that could come apart far, far safer. Okay.

Another option is these metal basket muzzles. I love these muzzles, but I don't recommend them for what we're going to do today. I don't recommend them for visits to the Veterinarian.



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Why do I love them? The dogs can pant, they can stick that right in the water and drink. They could probably you know even eat their kibble through that. They're really, really functional. The problem I don't like these for is if the dog panics and starts thrashing, this really hurt if you got hit with it. It's metal, it's heavy. The dog's big melon is going to swing around there. Yes, it's not as injurious as a dog biting but you know, time and place you make the decision.

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Okay. You can also get some really fancy posh custom-made ones. You could spend like two or \$300 for those. Or I think Etsy, you can, there's some custom-made neoprene ones there. So, those are your options for buying the muzzle.

Now let's talk about how to condition it. There's three stages. The first stage is just foundation games. Now, if you are in our membership Wag Nation, you're going to recognize some of these games that we've played to condition a head halter.

If you're not in Wag Nation and you'd like to learn more about it, I will leave a link to the show notes and a [special offer for you to join](#) because you know, it's kind of a cool place to be.

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Okay. So, the first stage is the foundation games. The second stage is building the value or your dog's positive conditioned emotional response. The third stage is testing the value or testing the positive CER. So, the foundation. Here's some of the things you're going to need. You're going to need a dog bowl.

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And if you're listening to this, I'd recommend you come on over to YouTube because I'm going to put some actual dog training with actual dogs here so that you can see the demos. So, you need a dog bowl that's got a nice deep lip. Okay. So, this one is I don't know, two or three inches tall. So that's one thing you're going to need some super high value rewards, like exciting rewards.

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Also, some rewards that will fit through the muzzle that you have selected. Okay. So, you have to consider the type of rewards you're going to use. For example, something small when you're feeding through a muzzle those cookies fall, and it frustrates the dog. So, things that are longer like a piece of string cheese that you can stick in there and the dog can grab it and pull it in. Things that are bigger, like a big piece of liver. I like to stick those in.

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So, consider the rewards that you're using when you're working at conditioning the dog's acceptance of this and conditioning the consent that the dog is going to give you because we have to be able to get the cookies, eventually get them through the muzzle. Okay. So, we need a bowl, also you'll need a canning funnel. So, this is what is a canning funnel. I don't can, but I use this for dog training.

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Actually, we use this in the kitchen quite a bit. So, you know, you pour things in there and if we're going, stuff is going to a jar. I use this a lot for dog training believe it or not. Cue the suspenseful music. You're going to see exactly what I do with that today. Okay. High value rewards.



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You're also going to potentially need a marker word. A clicker would do. Also, you may want to just work on a dog's chin rest or some way for them to communicating consent to you. That isn't necessary. What we're going to do is going to be super clear to your dog that they are buying in. But if you've got that, that's a great prerequisite for today, but it can't be called a prerequisite. It could be called a optional requisite. Is that a word? We're making it up right now. All right.

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So, here's what we're going to do. We have a bowl. We're going to put a cookie in the bowl and we're just going to put on the ground high value reward. Ask your dog to sit, put the cookie on the ground, release them, break. Okay. Whatever your release word is. Dog dives, gets a cookie. Do that, two or three times.

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And then what we're going to do is we're going to put the canning funnel in the dog bowl, and you're going to put a cookie back in the dog bowl. Step one, the dog eats out of the bowl. Step two, just wait until the dog looks in the bowl. Like they think there's a cookie in there. You're going to give the release word. They put their head in, then you mark it 'good' and drop the cookie in the bowl.

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So now here on step two, the dog has to put their head in the bowl before we mark it and drop the cookie. So, we don't want them going in part way. So, you know, they've got to go put their head in eventually. If your dog has been shaped, they're going to figure this game out. Target the bottom of the bowl, hold it for a second. That's what we want to grow up to. And that's all step two is.

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Step three, bring in your canning funnel. Put the canning funnel into your dog bowl, drop a cookie and same drill. The dog just eats the cookie out of the canning funnel inside the dog bowl. Then what we're gonna do is we're going to lift that.

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Now you can say, you can ask your dog to sit in between every time or not, depending on how coordinated you are with all of this. By asking for the sit and the release, it gives you a little bit of time to organize your thoughts and all of your equipment. So now the canning funnel is going to be in the air slightly above the bowl.

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When the dog puts their face in, you are going to not put the cookie in the bowl. You're going to just put the cookie in your hand and the dog can eat it from your hand. Eventually we're getting this funnel away from the bowl until it's no longer horizontal, it's vertical. So, the dog just runs in, puts her face into the funnel.

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This is in Wag Nation. We call it the Place Your Face Game. It's a foundation for teaching a dog to love a collar or a head halter. And so, we've got that, you are done, all of your foundation. We're moving on to stage two, which is our value build. Okay. Stage two, value build or building your positive CER. You're going to take your muzzle and we're going to do reverse muzzling.





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Here's how, here's what that will look like. You're going to take a cookie and you're going to feed your dog from the muzzle. So, the dog comes up and you're going to give him cookies from around the outside of this muzzle. All that we're doing is going, "Hey, this is like a piñata of really good dog cookies."

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So, in and out, that's all you're going to do. You know, a lot of times when people are trying to create a positive CER, they like to use successful approximations and that'll work. But this is just so easy. Pick it up and we're just reversing the direction of the cookies. Instead of your face being in here what we want the dog to do is "Hey, this is a good thing. I've never seen this thing before." And you know you're going to spend time at each step. And you're going to write down what [your dog's TEMP](#) looks like.

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Were their ears up on their head? Their eyes are brown. Their mouth is relaxed. The furrow between their eyes is nice, relaxed. Everything's relaxed about their posture. Their ears are relaxed. Maybe you get a little tail wag. They're excited. They're on the balls of their feet. Do they have balls on their feet? I'm not sure. So, they're up high. You can tell that they're having fun. I want you to mark those things down so that you know what your dog saying, "I like this game looks like."

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All right. So, all that we're asking to do is come in and eat through the muzzle holes. They're going to learn to be happy about this. You're not going to do this once and then move on to the next stage. You might do this every day, maybe two or three times a day before you had to move to the next stage, which is going to be put the muzzle in the bowl.

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You're just going to put a cookie that sits up like a piece of cheese would be good, that sits up a little bit. And you're going to put that such that when the dog puts their face in the muzzle, the cookie is right there for them to eat. That's all we want. All right. And now you're, just like placing your face with a canning jar we're just—and this is, you know, I would undo this middle strap and actually undo all the strapping for this because it's hard for the dog to get their face in if the straps are on.

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If you're listening to this podcast you don't need to know that, but I just made a big script when I was doing a demonstration. Okay. So, we want that open. That the cookie is sticking up. The dog just has to put their face into this inviting hole where they can grab their cookie. And now we do the same thing we did with the canning funnel. We just gradually raise the height of the muzzle, and the dog is just taking a cookie from our hand, or you can stick it through the holes.

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Because we've got to get the dog used to the cookies are coming through the holes to you. So now evaluate your dog's TEMP. Are they still as happy as their body still as relaxed?

You can go back and forth between the step where we're feeding through the muzzle for the dog and the step where the dog is putting their face in the muzzle and refeeding them. We want to go back and forth through that on our mission. Remember we're in stage two, creating that positive CER for the dog.



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Now, all I want the dog to do is go into a sit. I'm going to put this out and they're just going to put their face in there. I'm going to give cookies. I'm going to get them up. I'm not tying it up. I'm not snapping it. Nothing else is going on. I just want you to place your face so I can feed you through the muzzle and then that's it. Place your face, feed you through the muzzle and then that's it.

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Again, you're going to do this a couple of times a day while you're watching TV, whatever it is that you do. Put it in your drawer every time you sit down to go on the computer, pull it out, play a little game with your dog and the muzzle. They are going to start looking forward to this because we are creating a positive CER for them. Okay. Now we've not, never connected this. So, what I want you to do now is if you're using one that's got this little snap, we need to condition the dog that this is a good thing.

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So, it's kind of like a clicker, so I would put it. So, the snap is almost close, and I would just put it in front of the dog. Snap it, feed the dog. Eventually this has got to go behind their head. And so, it's going to be loud behind their ears. We want them to be okay with that before we ever put it all together. All right.

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Now we've got a dog who loves to place their face in the muzzle, that doesn't mind the snap. And so, what we're going to do finally is we're going to fasten that up, but guess what, that's no longer a value build. That is actually the first step of stage three. Stage three, we are going to be connecting the muzzle.

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So, it is a value test. We're testing our positive CER. We're doing something that the dog may not like. So, is their body saying, 'I'm opting out'? All right. Put on the muzzle, tie it up, give them some cookies, take it off. That's all we're doing. Honestly, most dogs are not going to have any issue with this because we're still doing the same thing. We're just fastening the muzzle at the back.

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Put on the muzzle, feed the dog, take it off. Put on the muzzle, feed the dog, take it off. Now we've got a dog that says, "This is okay." It only stays on for a second or two. So, they see you pull it out of your desk drawer after you've just gone and looked at all my nice [TikTok videos](#) over there on TikTok. And they're like, "Yeah, I want that on."

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Now we're in a place we're going to give it a name. So, cuing this behavior of muzzle up as some people would say, so what you call it is super important. Here's what I strongly suggest you call it. And I would like you to say it in a really excitable way like this. I want you to call it 'Hey-Ken-Yew!', 'Hey, can you!'. That's what it is. You can put it behind your back. You're going to say, "Hey-Ken-Yew!" and then bring it out and your dog's gonna fly and put their face in it.

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Put it behind your back. "Hey-Ken-Yew!" Boom. Put your dog into a sit, bring it out. If they get out of the sit, put it back behind your back ask them to sit again because you didn't release them.



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They are in the sit and then they, you can see the muzzle you're going to then say, "Hey-Ken-Yew!" and they're going to fly and put their face in and you're going to tie it up. Listen, to most of you it's just a fun snappy cue. It's going to be very different than anything your dog has ever heard before. But for any of you who own a fearful, worried, or reactive dog where you may need to have to put the muzzle on in a hurry, well imagine this.

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Imagine you're out [walking your dog then you see some dog coming](#) over the crest of a hill and you've got to quickly get your dog's muzzle on. So, you pull it out and you say, "Hey, can you come and get your dog?" And your dog just thinks that means I get my muzzle and everything's good.

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But you going to practice that a couple of times. It's going to be, "Hey, can you!" and you're going to finish the sentence, "Can you come and get your dog please?" All right.

So, if you say it in excitable tone, "Hey, can you!", that is something that you are now creating a conditioned emotional response. So even if your body is tense and stress because you see a dog coming over a crest towards your dog, your dog has been triggered to something amazing and positive.

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"Hey, can you!", Boom shaka laka, "Where's my muzzle? I can't wait to get it on." Now what happens is people may or may not even have a cue for this, but they might just say like, "muzzle up". And they see this dog coming over the crest and they're saying, "muzzle up, muzzle up, muzzle up". And then they're saying, they're trying to yell "Can you come get your dog?!"

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And if that happens to you often enough, your dog is going to cue in that "Can you come get your dog?" means something horrific is potentially about to happen. A dog's going to come down barreling down on you. Okay. So just building an extra positive CER within this game. All right. So now we have a dog that will happily put this on, on cue. We need to now work on the double D.

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So typically, when we are testing value it's duration, distance, and distractions. Well, we're not, we don't really have to get any great distance away from our dog wearing this. So, we're really focusing on the duration that the dog wears it, which are going to ping pong just 5 or 10 seconds at a time and gradually grow the distance.

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At first, you're feeding a lot and then you're gradually going to slow down how frequently you're feeding. And now we have a dog who's happily wearing this for a minute or two. Building that duration of how long they wear it.

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Eventually I'd love to see your dog just chillaxing while you're watching TV and they're wearing their muzzle for 5 or 10 minutes and you can throw cookies in their bed, and they can eat from their muzzle. Now the distractions. You're going to work on, first thing is moving.





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So, I would put your dog bowl back on the ground. I would take your dog bowl, put it upside down this time, put a big wand of cheese that the dog can grab through their muzzle, put it on the ground. And what you're going to do is walk in a circle and tell the dog to get it. All right.

So, it's just maybe even a half circle, just a couple of steps, get it. Then start doing, walking towards it. And then we're going to not load the bowl. It's just going to be down there as a target. You can walk in a circle around the room and the dog comes in and maybe targets it with their muzzle. Then you're going to give them cookie.

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Eventually you're just feeding the dog as you're walking. Right. Growing the movement part of wearing a muzzle. Again, if the dog shows you that all of that good body language, they're communicating with their tail, their ears, their eyes, their mouth, their voice. If they're telling you at any time "Uh, I don't like this." then you have gone too far, too fast, so you need to take it off and go back to value build.

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So, I recommend every time you add a new distraction or a longer duration, then you go back and do something easy, like eat through the outside of the muzzle. Right. Value build, back into his— Value building is money in the bank. Testing value has the potential to be withdrawing money. So, we don't want to do that.

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The final thing, the final distraction that's important that we work on is you touching the dog. So, I'm assuming that you've built in positive CERs for touching your dog's paws and ears and lifting up their tail, maybe taking their temperature. And we're going to do all that while wearing a muzzle.

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You're going to keep doing this good work and then work up to doing it in different locations, not just in your home, your backyard, your front yard at the park, at a friend's place. And then we want to work up to a friend doing it. So, you aren't the one touching the dog.

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So eventually the dog can go with somebody else, and they'll do all these good things. It's a slow process, but it's just a fun dog training exercise, right? It's an investment of your time. And honestly, I hope you never need to use a muzzle. But it's not just conditioning a dog to a muzzle. It's conditioning a dog to know that they can opt out.

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It's conditioning you to recognize the signs that your dog is happy or not happy. It's just a great exercise to deepen that relationship with your dog. And trust me, it's an exercise that your veterinarian is going to be super happy that you did. I know this went on really long today. I hope you got to the very end.

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I'd love to hear from you. Have you worked on conditioning a muzzle for your dog? Will you do it now just as a fun training exercise? I'd love to hear back from you. See you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.



## Dog Muzzles: Everything You Need To Know And How To Muzzle Train Dogs

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Hi, it's me Susan. Just stepping in because I wanted to share with you, this message is really important. It came to like when a Veterinarian pleaded publicly on social media because they were seeing so many reactive dogs in their clinic.

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And I said I would put together this resource. So, my team has gone above and beyond. They have a separate page just for this resource. You can see that whole video, there's a downloadable eBook that you can share with all of your clientele.

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So, if you're a Veterinarian, if you're a Board and Train, or a Groomer, or you have any kind of business that interacts with dogs when they maybe a little bit worried. So, we have all these resources on that page. Yes, you will have to [leave your name and email address to get access to those resources](#). It really is just so that we know who's sharing this information.

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So go ahead and click the link you'll see on this page. Anybody that has anything to do with dogs you are more than welcome to use this video and the eBook that we put together to help dogs. I would love this to be spread far and wide so that people are safe, and dogs are respected when they need that respect the absolute most. Thank you for your time. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

### Get Your Free eBook for Muzzle Training and the Video Embed Code:

<https://dogsthat.com/muzzle>

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### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 106: Consent In Dog Training: The Misuse, Misunderstanding And Misapplication](#)

[Podcast Episode 107: Pedicure Please: 3 Steps To Dog Nail Trimming Or Grooming Success At Home!](#)

[YouTube Video - Vet Visits For Dogs: How To Create A Positive Experience For Everyone](#)

[Podcast Episode 132: All The Things Your Dog Hates And How To Fix Them](#)

[Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

[YouTube Video - Should My Dog Be Off Leash Right Now?](#)

[YouTube Playlist - Cooperative Care and Consent in Dog Training with Susan Garrett](#)

[Baskerville Muzzle at Amazon](#)



## Dog Muzzles: Everything You Need To Know And How To Muzzle Train Dogs

### 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>
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