

Episode: #160

10 Common Puppy Mistakes: What To Do Instead!

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG I have owned nine puppies and a lot of rescue dogs that have all grown up to be amazing adult dogs. Dogs that were the envy of people who met them. Dogs that people wanted to own themselves. Was I lucky? No, I followed a process. And equally important as following a process, I avoided doing certain things with my puppy. And that is what I'm going to talk about on today's podcast. Things I absolutely don't do that a lot of other people might do with their new puppy.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And I've got 10 things I want to talk about that people will do, either intentionally or inadvertently, the first day they get a puppy. And these are things that I absolutely will avoid doing when I get a new puppy. So, let's think about the goal.

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What we want is, we want a confident dog. We want a dog who's so bonded with us. They're part of the family. They're part of the team. They do as we ask. Maybe we want to play a sport. Maybe we just want a great companion to go hiking or go visiting family with. That's what we have in mind. We have this goal. And so, everything that I do with a puppy, I reflect back on what I've talked about many times here on the podcast and that's [my 5C formula](#).

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It starts with connection. Well, who can't be connected with a puppy? I mean, they're cute. They're amazing, right? So, connection and then clarity and then confidence. For me, that clarity starts with the clarity of how to be excited, and how to be calm. That starts on day one. And it just carries through with everything that we do.

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So, when I look at things that I do with my puppy I ask myself, "does this contribute to growing confidence in that puppy? Is this giving me a better connection, giving more clarity to the puppy to exactly what I want. And is this helping to grow a confident puppy?" And so, the first thing that people do is they're just not prepared.

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They haven't done appropriate shopping. Like, who doesn't like shopping, people? Do your shopping, you have permission. So, things like the obvious, you need really good quality dog food and treats. Highest quality dog food and treats that you can afford. And then we need a place to house our puppy. So, a crate or maybe more than one crate, a ex-pen or maybe more than one ex-pen. I'll get to that later in the podcast, what we're gonna do with said ex-pen.

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You want to go around and visit Veterinarian clinics. You want to decide what would be the best place for you to take your puppy to and really, it shouldn't just be what's closest and what's cheapest. There is a lot of difference between Veterinarian clinics. You want a clinic that is going to treat your puppy with kindness. You want [every visit to be a pleasant one](#) for the puppy.



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So, you know, ideally a fear free clinic but even if they're not a fear free clinic go in and talk to them and meet the staff and ask them questions. And ask people in your neighborhood about the Veterinarians they use and why they like their Veterinarian.

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I can tell you why I might like my Veterinarian. If she doesn't know the answer, she finds it. You want somebody that doesn't shrug. They go that extra mile for you. Likewise, training, super important. Decide the [methodology](#) that you want to take to train your puppy. Be very intentional about this.

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This for sure is not something you just go "I'm going to the local. I'm gonna put all my trust and faith in them." Because if you've been following the podcast, you know that there's a lot of different ways to grow your puppies. And some of them will grow that relationship and bond with you. Some will suppress behaviors and suppress emotions and potentially ruin that bond that you have with your dog.

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So be very intentional before you ever get that puppy. You're here listening to this podcast so maybe you've already done that. Go over to YouTube and check out the [puppy playlist](#). We have a lot of great education there, right there for you on YouTube. It's all free guys. It's all free.

Okay and finally yes, there's the obvious. You've got to buy a leash and a collar and maybe a harness or a head halter. You possibly need a dog bed or 20...Whatever you do, no judgment here. I might have the odd dog bed around this house.

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So, number one, people aren't prepared. You know, they go to the pet store on their way home with their new puppy. "Oh yeah, we need a collar, don't we?" You know, some people might shop for things like a collar and leash, but they don't think of the other things. Number two thing that people do is their expectations are way too high, way too high for a puppy.

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Like a puppy is a baby. Think like one step up from an amoeba. Like we say in sports 'they've got a very low floor but a very high ceiling'. Like an amoeba got a low floor and a low ceiling. So, a puppy comes with, you know, there's nothing factory installed guys. And so, they're going to make a lot of mistakes.

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Your expectations shouldn't be what you've been seeing on TV where the puppies you know, can solve a mystery and retrieve Jimmy from the well. We want to keep our expectations very low, which means we are going to put the expectations very high on ourselves. Meaning, please don't leave [puppies and children](#) unsupervised together.

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Even if you've got the greatest kids known to man. You know, things could happen. And so, you want to ask yourself, "is this growing confidence? Deciding to leave my two-year-old with my puppy while I go and make some coffee? Is there a potential that this may take away confidence?" Just don't do it. That's why we have our puppy area, ex-pens that we've bought right?



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Number three, people overwhelm the puppy on that first day. You know, you don't need to call all your aunts and uncles, your grandma and your grandpa. You do not need a big family reunion for everyone to meet the puppy on day one. I like to give my puppy three days to just grow their confidence in their new environment.

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So really low-key visits from anybody. And definitely I don't ever want to see what we identified in [podcast episode number 157](#), a puppy going over threshold or showing signs of anxiety because they're overwhelmed by, you know, all the family pets came in to meet them all at once. All of a sudden there's an iguana there and they've never met an iguana before.

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And there's all these people and there's these kids going, "Oh, isn't he cute?" Take it easy. Ask, "is it growing confidence?" Number four mistake that I don't make with my puppies and this is a biggie. This is just way too much unsupervised freedom in a house. You don't have your puppy area set up.

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Now in podcast episode number 70, I talked about the flip of this. I talked about all the things that I do to prepare to have an amazing puppy. So, after you listen to this one, go over to [podcast episode number 70](#) and listen to the things that I do, including setting up those puppy areas with ex-pens so that I can know that my puppy isn't going to make a mistake.

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So, if the puppy has all this freedom to roam wherever they want in the house, they're gonna chew things that maybe they shouldn't be, including possibly an electric cord. They may pee or poop in inappropriate places. They may learn to rehearse habits that are not going to help you to have the puppy of your dreams down the road.

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So, minimize. Yes, they need time to be out and about and explore, but that's supervised with you watching what they're doing. Number five, I keep my slippery floors covered. Most people today have you know, some either some nice, polished hardwood or some linoleum, that's a kind of slick.

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And puppies that splay out their legs have a higher chance of developing things like hip dysplasia or just you know, hurting their shoulders. OCD is common from trauma in the environment. So, I like to cover my floors with dirty dog doormats or [dirty dog runners](#). The runners that the puppy at least has like a little runway to run along.

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You know yes, puppies have burnout and they're built so that they're flexible, their joints aren't really connected and it's not as bad as if an older dog wipes out. But they have done studies and they have shown that the more slippery the surface that the puppies are raised on the higher chance they have of an injury.



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So, if you got a lot of slippery floors, you might want to invest in some nice floor runners. Number six, if you are going to have a dog that you would like for them to go to the bathroom outside in the yard or on a walk, then I would not advise you to introduce them to indoor pee-pee pads. Now some of you might live in like high-rise apartments and you've got little dogs that you want them to pee inside your apartment. That's not what I'm talking about.

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I'm talking about if you have a dog that you want them to go outside, then start now. I don't, it might be the winter. It's okay. If it's the winter that would've been part of your preparations, you would've cleared an area with a snow shovel to make sure that there's a spot for the puppy to pee or poo on that isn't over their ears in snow.

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So don't have anything indoors that you're encouraging to pee on because guess what, a kid's coat on the floor or maybe your coat on the floor could very much be mistaken for a pee-pee pad. So just don't even bother starting, it really confuses them. Makes [house training](#) easier if you just keep it all outside.

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Number seven, people are taking their puppies out and about for socializing on day one. They're going, "Hey, let's go to the hardware store, look my puppy's got their ears back. It's okay, just take him he'll get used to it." No. Oh no, no. Oh, nay nay. You know, if you've got your puppy from a great breeder and even some really good rescues, your puppy may have already been out and about at places like hardware stores where they could see other people and they could hear other sounds.

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And I think it's a great idea for you to do it as well, but not in the first day or two that you have that puppy. Remember, build confidence. You will see that puppy transform and get their confidence after a couple of days. So do not take them out on field trips on day one. They do not need to socialize with everybody.

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Mistake number eight that I don't do, is people tend to start using cues like "sit" and "down" and "come" and "stay" with their puppy right on day one. Like I mentioned, the options were not installed at the manufacturer. So, things like understanding your cue words, "sit, down, stay". that's got to be trained. That's on you. That's on education. That goes back to point number three, expectations are a little bit too high if you're saying things like "stay, stay, stay" or "sit, sit, sit" right on day one. Let them grow that confidence. You can start the training and guess what, they'll learn those things soon enough.

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And just as aside, I don't teach things like "sit" or "stay" to my puppies. Well, I never used the word "stay", but I don't teach the word "sit" probably for a week or two or maybe even a month. It really depends. There's a lot of other things that I like to teach first. So don't be in a hurry to add a cue until you've got a behavior that you absolutely love. There's a little bonus tip right there for you.



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Number nine, people tend to get the puppies way over stimulated. They get overtired. There's this old saying 'a tired puppy is a good puppy'. And to an extent I believe that, but an overtired puppy is a cranky, snapping, snarling, over spun, puppy. You don't want that. You know, new puppies need to sleep 18 to 20 hours a day. Some of them more, depending on the breed.

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So, you want to not overstimulate that puppy because they're going to make mistakes. You are going to get in trouble, and you are not going to like to see what you're going to see. So just don't expect too much, do not overstimulate them. Make sure that you do a little bit, take them outside, potty break and then let them have a nap.

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Point number 10, people expect the puppies to sleep in a place away from them. And you end up with puppies who cry pitifully through the night, or they bark, or they scream. I did an entire podcast on how to get your puppy to sleep through the night in [Shaped by Dog number 26](#). And it works guys, it really works.

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And so, even if you don't want your dog to [sleep in your bedroom](#) just for the first few weeks or a little longer, let that dog grow confidence. Let that dog sleep in the room just like I described in that podcast episode. And I promise you, you will have much sounder sleep and a much happier puppy.

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I'm gonna give you two bonuses. I said I was gonna give you 10, but I got two more. Okay, this is a biggie. You've got to keep your cool. You've got to keep your cool. So, on the one hand puppies are cute. I mean, they're super cute and we love them. On the other hand, they bite, they poop, they chew, they pee, they bark, they shred, they dig, they scream, they puke, they chase, they nip, they scratch.

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They whine, they destroy stuff, and they climb on everything. Oh, did I mention that they poop, and they pee? Yeah, that's what a puppy is. So go to your happy place and know the puppy's doing the best they can with the education they have, which is zero, in the environment that you've put them in. So, if you do everything that I mentioned in podcast episode number 70, you will be setting your puppy up for success.

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You won't be nearly as frustrated, and you won't see as many things coming out of your puppies' orifice or as many surprises around your home. And my final bonus is, the use of reinforcement. So, here's another thing that I do differently in that I don't use food lures. And I'm not saying it's wrong. I'm just saying we do things differently around here. We do a lot of things differently than other people.

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So, we use food as a reinforcement. We don't get the puppies to follow food because we don't want them to think food is something they should be seeking out and trying to steal as they do with the food lure.



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Because my hallucination is that is not going to help them not want to [get on the counters](#) and steal the food off the counters or to be scavenging in your kitchen all day long. So, we use food as a reinforcement, and it all starts with a game ItsYerChoice. I am going to leave a link here on YouTube. I'm gonna leave a link in the show notes for how you can [access ItsYerChoice](#).

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It is a phenomenal game to play with your puppy. And that's the one thing that I do like to do. I'm gonna give you a little spoiler alert here before you go over to Shaped by Dog number 70, I do a lot of interactive play with my puppies.

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Remember I said, "I want clarity of how to be of when you're excited and clarity of when you're calm". I do that with a tug toy. Super, super important. And I think I might have left that off of your shopping list on point number one. So, permission to shop. Go ahead. My favorite toys I get from 4MyMerles.com but have at it. If you're buying a puppy toy, get a nice long one. They like to chase things on the ground and get those sharp little teeth away from your hands.

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There you have it. 10 things I never do with a puppy on the first day I get them. A couple extra bonus things for you. I would love it right now if you love puppies and you're loving this podcast, please go ahead and hit the like button. If you're watching this on YouTube and you're not a subscriber, hey go ahead subscribe now. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 21: The 5 Critical Dog Training Layers for Confidence with Anything](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 146: Balanced Dog Training: Does It Really Exist?](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 58: How to Create Kid Friendly Dogs and Dog Friendly Kids](#)

[Podcast Episode 157: Dog Body Language: Understanding Canine Communication Signals & Emotions](#)

[Podcast Episode 70: Critical Info for Your Puppy's First Day and Night at Home](#)

[Dirty Dog Doormat Runner](#)

[Podcast Episode 48: Potty Train Your Puppy in a Week \(Easy 3 Step Process\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 26: Pro Dog Training Tips to Get Your Puppy to Sleep All Night](#)

[Blog Post: All About Dogs Sleeping in the Bedroom](#)

[Podcast Episode 33: How Do I Stop My Dog Counter Surfing?!](#)

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



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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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