

Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

SG So you have a new puppy and you're thinking of [ways to socialize](#) it. Here's one you may not have thought of. How about outdoor cafés? Yeah, that seems a little wild, but stick with me. It's a great place I love to take puppies and if you do it right, it has a lot of benefits. And today I'm going to share with you exactly what I do to set my puppy up for a successful, enjoyable night at a café.

00:00:31

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And maybe you have considered taking your puppy to an outdoor café and it ended terribly wrong. And the worst thing that could happen isn't just that you have a horrible frustrating evening, and your meal gets ruined. There's a lot of bad outcomes that could happen if you just decide, "Hey, let's go out for supper and let's take the puppy."

00:00:52

The puppy could be way overwhelmed. They could see way too much of children or loud boisterous happy hour visitors or dogs rushing up to their face because hey, you're outside on the street. The puppy could end up wrapping the leash around somebody's leg and tripping somebody. The puppy could end up getting loose and you running through a parking lot, trying to catch the puppy.

00:01:12

The puppy could end up a lot worse off than that. The puppy could end up having a horrible experience that leaves some fearful, quivering, maybe even drooling in the corner saying, "when are you going to finish your meal?" I don't want that to happen to anybody's puppies. So, when you do this right, here's the outcomes that I like to get when I take my puppies to an outdoor café.

00:01:34

Number one the most important thing we're always doing with our puppies is growing confidence. So, we're growing confidence in a new environment. I love to take my puppies to cafés, probably for reasons that other people wouldn't be taking them to a café for. I love to take them so that they learn dogs, people, children, cars, going by, maybe bicycles, or skate boarders, that's white noise. Ignore them. They're not coming to you. You're not going to be visiting them.

00:02:02

My puppy learns to relax in one spot for an extended duration. And it's just one more repetition of don't beg from the table. Plus, when you plan the way I'm going to share with you today, you end up having a great meal out, providing you pick the right restaurant, a great meal out with your puppy.

00:02:19

Great experience for the puppy, great confidence boosting, and a great experience for you and your puppy. So, let's start, there's five areas that I'm going to talk about. Number one is planning and preparing and most important on that list is know your puppy. If you have a puppy that has already showed you that they are lacking confidence in different environments, taking them to a restaurant, not the greatest plan.



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

00:02:43

There's a lot of other more quiet places you could take just for moments in time where you can grow their confidence of having positive, amazing experiences. So, every new location creates a [positive C.E.R. for that puppy](#), and they learn that different isn't bad. Different doesn't mean be afraid. Different means good things are going to happen here.

If you have a puppy who starts off a little bit worried, that is going to take time. So please don't take that puppy to a busy restaurant for one of your first-time outings. So, you need to know your puppy. The other part of planning is, always have a backup plan. I'm going to take my puppy to the restaurant and here is my backup plan.

And usually, it's just one of two things. Number one is I would like to park my car as close to the outside table that I'm going to be eating at. And so, my number one backup plan is if my puppy looks overwhelmed, overexcited, or looking a little bit worried, then I may just open the car door, put my puppy in their crate, ideally that they could still chillax in their crate with me on the opposite side of a sidewalk.

00:03:51

If that's not possible then I might just say, "Hey, here's a nice tip. I'm sorry for your time. This isn't working out." taking my puppy out and I'm just going to go and do something fun and loving in an environment that they can be confident in. Backup plan always important. It doesn't matter if you haven't got your dessert, vegan chocolate chip cookies will wait. Nothing more important than growing your puppy's confidence.

So having a backup plan. Now let's start with how you can make sure it's an enjoyable experience. And there's three skills that I like to have trained my puppy to be successful with before I take them to any kind of outdoor café. Number one is [Crate Games](#). It's just such a brilliant model to teach any puppy how to be relaxed and chill for a long duration and you grow that behavior till they can do it with a crate door open.

00:04:36

So that is a great model to take us to our Hot Zone. Now, a Hot Zone is doing that kind of duration behavior waiting for our release in a dog bed. My puppy understands Crate Games. We've trained Hot Zone. And I make sure that their ex-pen is near one of our tables, so they rehearse lying in a dog bed right at the corner of the ex-pen, which is right near the table. They rehearse that for every meal that we have. Why? I don't know, they just like to be near me.

There's a dog bed right in the corner and the corner is closest to where I'm sitting at the table. So, every single meal that puppy is rehearsing being in their [Hot Zone](#). Then you can move it beside the table and here is where you're going to attach your leash and do a pretend restaurant visit.

The third game that I love to play with my puppies is [ItsYerChoice](#) and ItsYerChoice is a valuable game whenever you go out and to any kind of new environment. I'll get to that a little bit later.

00:05:31

So, we've got those three games and when your puppy is ready and they know those games, first thing you're going to do is practice it around your own kitchen table. Try a short meal, whatever your smallest meal of the day is, put your puppy on a leash, put them in their Hot Zone, have the leash attached to you. I'll preface this by saying when I get to a restaurant, I will tie that leash to the chair I'm sitting on. More on that later.



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

00:05:52

At home you can just you know, sit on the leash and the puppy [stays in the dog bed](#) beside you. You have a bait bag attached to your belt, and you're just going to give them cookies throughout the meal. They'll probably relax pretty easily because you've built so much value for Crate Games and Hot Zone. Alright, now we've done it at our home a few times. Now call the folks or call the neighbors and say, "Hey, can we just like have a barbecue in your backyard this weekend? Because I'd like to do a little dog training with my puppy."

00:06:18

Now we got yet another new location. We're doing it outside. You might of course try it in your own backyard without a lot of people around before you take it to the neighbors or your family members. You want to hedge your bets by putting in as much reinforcement as you can for the puppy learning 'you chillax while I eat a meal'.

At the end of the meal, you say "break". Of course, you've given that puppy a lot of reinforcement along the way. I'll tell you about that schedule when we get to the restaurant and it's a no brainer for the puppy. Alright. We've prepared our puppy well, now let's talk about what we bring to a restaurant.

00:06:51

Number one, I like to have that puppy on a harness. So that if they get frightened and they bolt, you're not going to have a puppy hanging from their neck. Now, if it's a harness that they potentially could slip out of, maybe put two leashes on. That's fine too. But if you have a puppy that's that nervous, you're not taking them to the restaurant anyway, right? Right agree? Everyone, agree with me. Nod your head with Susan. "Yeah, that's right Susan. We're going to wait."

Maybe our puppy doesn't go to her first restaurant until she's nine months, or a year, or a year and a half, or two years. That's okay. There is no puppy agenda that we have to get there at a certain time. So, you're going to have your puppy on a harness. I like a bit of a longer leash, one that I tie to my chair that I'm sitting on, and I don't move from the chair once it's tied. So, if I have to go to the bathroom, I untie the leash and I hand it to my friend and she ties it to her chair, or he ties it to his chair.

00:07:43

Really important that it's anchored. I don't just want it on my wrist while I'm eating, because again if by some chance something spooks that puppy, and they could easily run in the direction that my hand is pointing, and the leash is gone. So, I like to tie it to my chair that I'm sitting on, and I never leave the chair. It's well anchored and the puppy is going to be relaxed if there a harness on, in element number two that you're bringing is a dog bed.

00:08:08

I always bring a dog bed with sides. It's so much easier to create a boundary. Like it's just, you know it doesn't have to be like Fort Knox, but my puppies train at Hot Zones. It's so easy with a bed with sides because they can see where correct and incorrect criteria is because of this little, small wall of material that makes the dog bed.

I don't like just a towel on the ground. I don't like just a flimsy— yeah, you can do that with adult dogs, they can figure that stuff out. But it's puppies growing confidence, setting them up for success. That means they're not going to be roaming around the restaurant and you having me to bring them back and bring them back and bring them back.



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

00:08:42

Honestly, every single time I brought Belief to a restaurant, she has not once got out of her Hot Zone bed. Not once. Because it's the same bed that she has at home. So yeah, you're packing your dog bed when you're going to a restaurant. Maybe it's a little embarrassing. I'm not embarrassed ever. It's my puppy. She's got to have a proper digs, right?

Now I like to bring my own water bowl. I know a lot of restaurants have dog bowls outside in their café, but don't take a risk. There is bacteria, there is you know viruses like distemper, there's parasites, can all be transferred through a water bowl. I don't want to scare anyone. And I tell you, most restaurants will have that cleaned and brought it out every day. Why take a chance? Just bring a little popup water bowl with you. It's not a big deal.

00:09:24

So, I carry my purse. It's got my dog bowl in it, and it's got my really good high value treats in a clip-on dog pouch. I want to clip that onto my waistband. I do not want to put it on the table because what is that teaching my dog? From my table to your mouth, from my table to your mouth. Oh, all of a sudden, we have a dog who likes to beg at the table, right? No, we don't want puppies begging at the table. Comes from my pouch and it goes into my puppy's mouth. Or sometimes I just say "search" and I toss it in the bed, the rolled bed. Right. The barrier bed so they know exactly where to look for it.

00:09:57

Let's talk about a couple things you do not bring. Number one, a flexi. That's a tool that nobody wants to see at a restaurant. No good can come from that. You do not bring your puppy on a retractable leash. That is a recipe for a disaster. So, I'm not a fan of retractable leashes for puppies, period. You know, maybe when you're walking in the woods by yourself and there's no chance of anything else out. And even then, I wouldn't do it. Okay. That's another podcast, I guess.

No retractable leash. Number two, a squeaky toy or a really smelly meaty bone that's going to attract any neighborhood dogs that might be off leash or break their leash away from their owners. So, we want positive experience to set our puppy up. Yes, you can bring a chew toy that is more benign that doesn't have an odor and that the puppy might engage with, but I wouldn't put anything with a lot of smelly good food in there. And I wouldn't bring my puppy out if it's like really, really unbearably hot out. Alright.

00:10:52

So, make this for a nice cooler evening where the puppy's not going to be uncomfortable and panting and worried all on top of everything else. Nice, cool evening. So, leave your flexi lines at home and bring your leash that's long enough to tie to a chair, your dog bed, and your really tasty treats, and your collapsible water bowl. Okay. Before you leave, make sure you get that puppy a moderate amount of exercise. You know, we want them to be tired, not tired and cranky like going overwhelmed because 'I'm just so exhausted and this is new'.

00:11:19

Just moderate exercise appropriate for the age of your puppy. You're going to do that before you go to the restaurant. Also, you're going to look ahead and scout out what would be the perfect location for my puppy to have their first experience. The first thing I would suggest is you pick a little coffee shop. Something that is going to be tucked away, not on a busy road. You're just going to go sit outside, have a coffee and leave.



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

00:11:42

My puppy Belief is five months old. I'm still following the same protocol with her. I try to get a table against a wall, and it would be ideal if it was backed into a corner, like there was two walls that we're just kind of tucked into. That hasn't happened yet for us but tucked against a wall would be ideal away from traffic.

So, where the server is bringing meals in and out of the kitchen, that's not a good table for us to be in. So, I want a table that is ideally against a wall away from foot traffic, away from loud and boisterous other tables, and ideally far away from the road, if at all possible. Now I have picked a kind of a secluded area where there really isn't much traffic.

00:12:24

All of the places that Belief's been to have been either on roads that have closed down, or café's on where there's no traffic, or very, very quiet streets. So, you're going to pick the right table for your puppy. Next thing that is a must have for me, I have to have one other person that comes with me. Now I have some really cool restaurants that I like to visit. So, I just invite a friend out for a meal and there's two of us.

Why two of us? Because if the puppy is here against the wall and I have my friend sit across from me, then my friend can watch for any foot traffic or other dogs coming up this way. I can watch for foot traffic or anything happening this way. So, I know when to bump up the rate of reinforcement for my puppy, so they are less likely to notice the foot traffic.

00:13:07

They don't have to like, mark the traffic to get their cookie. This is just about [creating positive CERs](#) for that puppy. I don't care if they really don't actually you know, lock in on somebody throughout the meal. At some point they are going to notice somebody, but if you have a high rate of reinforcement and with high value rewards, they're happily going to stay in their Hot Zone.

Next thing I like to get a spare chair. Now, if this is a super crowded restaurant or café, you're probably going to leave. You're not going to take a puppy to a really crowded place, but I take a spare chair and I lie it on the side.

00:13:41

So, what I've done is I've created two sides of a barrier. So now I have a wall. And I have the back of a chair and the seat of a chair that create two more sides. There's only one open side now for my puppy. She's in her bed with just one open side. Sure, she could push through the chair, yada, yada, yada, I'm just trying to create more security for her.

Plus, if some stray dog comes rambling up, we've got a little bit of protection for that puppy. Now, ideally, of course, either myself or my friend are going to see that stray dog. So, we will go into high alert and one of us will go to the puppy. The other will start creating a barrier of distraction for that dog.

00:14:20

Next up, this is the plan. When you are out for dinner, somebody is always training or watching that puppy. When I say train there's a lot of evaluating. Evaluating the puppy's TEMP. When you first get there, they're going to be a little bit agitated. One of your people, you or the person, the other person know if they're very dog savvy, they could take over for you if you have to go to the restroom. But one is always watching the puppy.



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

00:14:42

And so, what you'll do is you'll look at what you want on the menu, and that person will be watching and engaging with your puppy. And then they'll look at what they want, they're going to order for both of you. So, when the server comes by, that's when your puppy's going, "Oh people! I want to visit!" And so, you've got to be ready with a high rate of reinforcement.

00:14:58

You can say, "Oh hi, I'm just training my puppy. My friend's going to order for us both." Don't take your eyes off your puppy to talk to anybody that comes through. Alright. Now, as a puppy gets used to this, and this is your third or fourth time out, puppy is probably going to be more relaxed and you could be a little less vigilant about your rate of reinforcement but you're still going to keep an eye on your puppy that whole time.

00:15:17

So, you're at the café. You're about to sit down. You've got your bait pouch already. One person gets out of the car, goes ahead, gets the table, puts the dog bed down. The other person is playing games with a puppy as you're walking towards the restaurant. You tell them, "Hop it up". The barrier's already there in place because the person ahead grab that chair put it on the angle so that the puppy is like, "Oh yeah, this is my Hot Zone. This is cool."

00:15:41

Now the first few minutes, I would have a pretty high rate of reinforcement. What does that mean? You might like, toss a cookie. You say "search", toss a cookie, say "cookie" or whatever your marker word is that a cookie is coming towards them. Mix it up. Next when you've evaluated 'that puppy is not frightened'. Now going to a round or two of ItsYerChoice. So, it might be cookies on your hand. It could be putting cookies actually on the edge of the bed so that you're engaging the puppy.

And what ItsYerChoice allows you to do is lower the rate of reinforcement for that puppy. So, they're not like eating a whole meal of cookies. They're being allowed to take in the environment while they're engaged in a game that they love to play with you.

00:16:20

And then you can take the cookies away. Bring one out occasionally when you see the puppy is just like, "You know, I'm going to relax. Yeah, I'm good here." Now some people would say, "Bring a meaty bone for that puppy." I would not bring things that may attract other dogs. So, you may or may not want to do that. Maybe a benign chew for the puppy, but nothing that has a chance of attracting if there was like a stray dog in the area.

00:16:43

Okay. So, we are training. Very vigilantly keeping an eye on. But the goal is eventually very quickly, that puppy has had a little exercise, they've had a couple games of ItsYerChoice, you've stimulated them mentally, given them time to now they've been in this environment for four or five, maybe 10 minutes, and they're starting to relax.

When you see that they're relaxed, you can lower that rate of reinforcement. Talk to them occasionally, talk to them again, then give them a "search", "cookie". And then talk to your friend, look at the puppy. You know there are going to be goofy things rolling on their back doing all kinds of crazy things but ideally, they're just chilling.



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

00:17:20

Okay. We finally have lowered the rate of reinforcement and guess what's going to happen, chances are your puppies going to go to sleep. That timing of the puppy going to sleep coincides with your meal arriving. So, you don't want to like, just get focused on your food. I know some of us are very food motivated.

00:17:35

Keep watching that puppy but don't interrupt them from their sleep. I know that's obvious, but I'm going to state the obvious anyway. You don't have to continue to give them food when they're dozing off to sleep, just let them sleep. Enjoy your meal and then wake your puppy up when it's time to go or start interacting with them.

00:17:49

If you're there for a very long time, it's not a big deal to wake them up, take them out for a little walk. Maybe even put them back in the car if the car is super close. So, on their first outing remember make that one a nice short one. Like you know, a little coffee at a coffee shop, and have a big celebration it went well, go home.

00:18:06

Once you've got more confidence that your puppy's going to do well at a restaurant, have at it at a restaurant. It's just such a great way to build confidence in your puppy while you're having a great meal. Like, who doesn't like to be out with her puppy, right?

00:18:17

Listen, I'd love you to jump over to YouTube. Let me know if this makes sense. Let me know if there's something else that you do if you take your dog out to a restaurant. I'd love to hear from you. Come on over to YouTube and while you're there, hey if you're not a subscriber, join us. It's like party central for all dog lovers over on YouTube. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

ItsYerChoice Summit:

Learn how to play ItsYerChoice: <https://recallers.com/iycsummit-join/>

Resources:

[Blog Post: Have You Tried A "Puppy Adventure Trip?"](#)

[Podcast Episode 130: Conditioned Responses: The Magic Every New Puppy \(And Dog\) Owner Must Know About](#)

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Podcast Episode 32: 20 Easy Ways to Exercise Your Dog at Home \(Hot Zone\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 134: How To Teach A Dog Stay WITHOUT Luring, Collar Pops Or Using The Word "Stay"](#)

[Podcast Episode 171: Dog Training With Layered Shaping: Why Classical Conditioning Must Come First](#)



Taking Your Puppy To A Café Or Restaurant: Socialization Success

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>

