

## Dog Sitting For A Friend? Top 10 Tips For Fun, Safety And Success

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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Have you ever had a friend or a relative say, "Hey, can you look after my dog for the weekend?" and you kind of thought, "I guess I have to, I don't know if I should." Well, today is your lucky day because in today's podcast, I'm going to share 10 tips that I put together for looking after somebody's dog in your home.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And over the last few weeks I've had the good fortune of looking after, not one, but two dogs that were not mine. One was a very good friend of mine; it was a Golden Doodle named Rosie. She was with me for four days and she was around here for about a month because she was in being trained with our good friend Lynda Orton-Hill.

The second was a rescue Beagle that my brother adopted about a year and a half ago and he was going away for four days for Canada Day with his family and so I got the Beagle. Now, taking on somebody's dog in your home could be the recipe for a huge disaster. It could be the recipe for really causing stress and anxiety to your own family or your family pet.

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So, I have put together a list of 10 things that I think should make it easy. Now, you may or may not go through all 10, but I think they're all very valid. One of them actually includes 14 items, so it might be more than 10 just saying. The first three I will do before the dog gets there.

Point number one, you need to plan for the safety and security of your own family and your own family pets. So, if you have a cat and this dog happens to not like cats, what's that going to look like? I think you, unless the cat is confined to one area in the house I would say "You know, I'll help you find somebody else, but I just can't do it."

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Bringing a dog into your home when you have other dogs, it's a great opportunity to get some socializing for your own dog. However, it shouldn't be a case of just open the door and see how it goes. It should be really, [really strategic](#).

So, when I bring somebody's dog into the house, they start in an ex-pen. So, for the Beagle, I had to go out and buy an extra tall ex-pen because he was a climber. And it starts with a crate as well.

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So, prepare ahead of time what that looks like for your own dogs. How is the routine going to be able to stay the same for them? How are you going to prepare so that they can choose to not be around that dog or be around at their own decision?

Both of those dogs ended up just hanging out with my dogs. My dogs just ignored them. Tater Salad was in love with the Beagle. They had a lot of fun together. But mostly my dogs they're just indifferent to other dogs.

So, point number one is don't let this be a bad experience for anybody in your family.



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So, plan what that will look like. And that plan might be finding out how is your dog with other dogs. Or you might know, "Well, I've got a 15-year-old dog who's not really fond of other dogs, so I'll just arrange for my older fella to be somewhere else."

Okay, point number two, try to spend some time ahead of time with the dog and owner so the dog gets a chance to get to know you. I find one of three things is super easy. A nice game of tug, a game of retrieve, or just some easy trick training.

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Just [teach the dog something](#) so that you are building a bond with that dog. Ideally more than once. Now with the Golden Doodle, my friends came in and stayed the night so the Doodle got a chance to hear the hubbub in the house and get to know what life was like around crazy town.

Number three. This is the, what, 14.1? I don't know. It could be more, could be less. And that is learn about the dog. Number one, who's the regular Veterinarian? Where do they go for emergency Veterinarian and who's an emergency contact?

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You need to know, does the dog have [any fears](#)? And ask, if they say, "Oh, he is not afraid of anything." "What about thunder?" "Oh yeah, he's really afraid of that." So don't just take "Oh, he doesn't have any." they might go "Oh yeah, I forgot. Because it's winter. Yeah, we don't really have thunder. But yeah, he is afraid of thunder or gunshots." Or whatever it is, find out what the dog's afraid of and what the dog loves.

What are the dog's cues? So, do they have cues for pottying? Does the dog know [how to go to the bathroom on leash](#)? These are things you want to know because you may not have a fenced in yard that you feel secure enough for a dog who might go over the top. So, when it's a new dog, I want them to go to the bathroom on leash. So that will come out later in one of our upcoming points.

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So, things like what are the list of the cues that the dog knows, behaviors the dog knows? Is the dog dog friendly? Hello, I have dogs here. What are the quirks? Does the dog have quirks? Like Momentum loves to suck on beds. That's a bit of a quirk. And so, if they see Momentum, if she was ever being looked after by somebody else, grab a bed, they might think, "Oh my, she's going to shred the bed." No, the nine-year-old dog just like sucking on beds.

So, find out, are there quirks or are there behavior issues that you need to know about ahead of time? Find out what the dog loves because we want to provide the dog with what he loves. What are the normal feeding times, walking times, exercise, like what is a normal way that the [dog gets exercised](#)?

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So just find out about the way the dog lives in their home. And if the dog is crate trained, if the dog will stay in an ex-pen, is there separation anxiety like just generally, get a list of those things so you can be prepared way ahead of time.

So, for example with the Beagle, I know there was a little bit of [separation anxiety](#) the first time I brought him in. So, when I was setting up his ex-pen, I set up a remote feeder in there. So as soon as he was in there, we could start reinforcing him, conditioning him that 'This is a good place, you're in a good place.'



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Number four is homework I would give the people. So, if it's family or friends, I'm going to say, "I will take your dog however you need to teach it these few basic things." Now, they may already have them, they may not.

Number one, the dog needs to potty go to the bathroom, both number one and number two on leash for at least a week before it comes to you. The dog has to be comfortable with that. Number two, they need to be crate trained.

So, I'll put a link in the show notes to [Crate Games](#). You can send them this link. "Hey, just sign up. It's not that expensive. Play this game. Your dog will love it and your dog's going to be more comfortable when they come to my place."

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Number three, the dog needs ItsYerChoice, right? We don't want to fight that, and it gives you the opportunity to start growing behaviors with the dog when you have them. I'll put a link to the [ItsYerChoice Summit](#) that you can join for free and send that on to the people who own the dog.

Number four, the dog needs [a sit](#) or [a down](#). You need some way to control them, and if it's taught a fun way, even better. So, I'll put a link to the two podcasts that will teach them how to teach the dog in a super fun way how to teach a sit or a down. Alright, so that's homework. I would send that off a couple of weeks at the minimum ahead of when I get that dog.

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Number five. I want to set this dog up for [psychological safety](#). So, when they come in the home, again it might be the first time they've ever been in my house, so I want the ex-pen somewhere where the dog can feel secure, maybe up against a wall.

Does the dog like to be in the middle of everything? So maybe the ex-pen should be in the kitchen. Or do they not like all the other dogs around so it should be somewhere where they can maybe see you, but not be right in the middle of everything.

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So set the dog up for psychological safety because the dog is going to be [triggered](#) into their rear brain fright, flight, or freeze if they're worried about overwhelmed with the environment and all the noise and "I don't feel comfortable in this ex-pen" and "Ooh, this is weird." So, you want them to bring things that are comfortable.

If they have their own ex-pen, their own crate, the dog bed, provided the dog doesn't shred dog beds, things like that. Their own toys, their own treats, those are things that they can bring ahead of time as well. So psychological safety, biggie.

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And number six, physical safety. So, you've got to know if that [dog's got a great recall](#). And I got to tell you, even though I live in 28 acres and there really is no major roads very close to me, the dog actually has to go through a marsh and a bog to get to a road at the very end of the 28 acres. I really don't like to take dogs off leash that aren't mine.

Now, the Doodle puppy, she was a puppy, I had her chasing my dogs. I knew that she was just going to stay around chasing the dogs. The Beagle, not taking a chance.



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So, you want to make sure that everything you do with that dog keeps that dog physically safe, including where they're sleeping at night, where they're hanging out during the day, what bones you give them to chew on, are these things that they normally have. So, it's super important that you don't want to break their dog while you have it.

Number seven, you need to plan out and know how you're going to fit in exercising that dog every day, giving them enrichment.

So, brain games and some mental stimulation. So just train them two or three times a day. Play a little game. If you're watching this podcast, you know there's all kinds of games that you can find right here on the podcast. Check out [the playlist](#) here on the podcast.

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Number eight, early as possible do a sleep test aka where will that dog be sleeping? And you will have known that be one of the questions you asked. Do they sleep in your bedroom? Do they sleep in a crate?

I would get them sleeping in a crate ahead of time if you plan to have them sleeping in a crate. So, get their owners if they normally sleep loose say, "Can you just get them to sleep in a crate for the last few days before you bring them to my house?"

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So where is that crate going to be? Is it going to be in your bedroom? Some dogs actually don't feel comfortable in your bedroom if you have other dogs there. So, I would do a sleep test. Put the dog where you plan on them sleeping for the night. Put that crate in that location. I like it either in my bedroom or just outside my bedroom.

And then take all your dogs and go in your bedroom if that's where your dogs sleep. Now, Momentum and Tater, they kind of sleep all over the house. So, if I have a dog visiting, they will have friends because Tater and Momentum, they just move around during the night. The other two [sleep in my bedroom](#).

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But if the dog is sleeping outside my bedroom, they'll have a couple of dogs. They won't be overwhelmed with dogs. But do that sleep test so you aren't tired, and you know, really needing your sleep and then now you have a dog that's not happy in their crate. Find that out ahead of time and then bring that remote feeder over, start training them to be happy in the crate.

You could also just let them sleep in an ex-pen if you have an ex-pen that is secure that the dog can't get hurt trying to climb out of it. Each of the two dogs who were here with me over the last month, both slept in their ex-pen during the night.

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Number nine, daily communication with the owner. So, send them a text, send them we call them 'proof of joy' pictures you know, aka the 'proof of life' pictures or little video clips so that they can have some relief when they're away that their dog is well taken care of, that their dog's having a great time so that they can just be busy doing the thing that they're doing when they're away. So daily communication to give them updates is a great, great thing to do.



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And finally, number ten. Make that dog feel special every day that they're with you.

You've got to remember they're going to feel a little bit of anxiety because they're in a strange place with different smells, different dogs, their people aren't there. So, try to make a point of making them feel special every day, time alone with you, doing something with you.

Now at first, when these dogs don't know me it's really just you know, things that involve food because high, high value rewards. High value rewards and we just play some games.

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But very quickly by the second day you know, I could just be out playing games with them, training them a new trick, whatever it is just take a little moment to make that dog's life special.

There you go. 10 things you can do to make sure babysitting a family or friend's dog is a win, win, win. The dog has a good time. You aren't too stressed. Your dogs aren't too stressed. And the people who own the dog are grateful that they have a friend in you.

I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources For Your Visiting Dog's Person:

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice](#)

[Teaching a Dog to Sit](#)

[Teaching a Dog to Down](#)

### Resources:

[YouTube Playlist: Living with Multiple Dogs Tips with Susan Garrett](#)

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

[YouTube Playlist: Fearful Dogs Help with Susan Garrett](#)

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

[YouTube Playlist: Exercising Your Dog's Body and Mind: Tips and Games with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 200: Solve Your Dog's Separation Anxiety With FRIDA: Expanding Calm With Functional Relaxation](#)

[YouTube Playlist: The Emotional State of Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 112: Stressed Dog? How Trigger Stacking Might Be Putting Your Dog Over Threshold](#)

[YouTube Video: How To Get Your Dog To Listen Outside Off Leash \(Step By Step Guide\)](#)

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

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



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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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