

Halloween Prep For Dogs: Tricks To Make Celebrations A Treat For Everyone

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Trick or treat, it's Halloween! And I've got a great training plan for everybody who owns a dog this Halloween season.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Some of you live in a country that really doesn't celebrate Halloween, but I bet you all recognize October 31st as a day. And so, my plan is going to work for everybody. And here's the plan. I think we should create a dog training event that ends on October 31st.

Like a training palooza. Think of like an advent calendar that you count down the days to October 31st, except you dog train down the days to October 31st. So, it could be like 'The dogs that are amazing by October 31st.'

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Now you could start October 30th and your dog is still going to be more amazing on the 31st than they were the 30th if you do one day of the training event. But you might do a week, you might do a month depending on when you're listening to this podcast.

So, the dog training event that ends October 31st. Stick with me. Why do we want to do this? Because Halloween can be super scary, and it can be super dangerous for dogs.

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So, this training event is going to mitigate the possibilities of either one of those things happening. Dogs at Halloween can be grouped into one of three categories.

Number one are the dogs who don't want anything to do with this holiday whatsoever. They just want to be in a room far, far away from the action. That's category number one.

Dogs number two. Those are dogs who, yeah, they want to be part of it. They want to see the trick or treaters. They want to be there while you're giving out the candy.

Dogs number three, those will be dogs you want to take trick or treating with you. And I'm going to give you a spoiler alert. I don't think you should.

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Now I get it, some kids have service dogs that they're going to go out with them. That's fair. Those dogs will be really well prepared. For the rest of you, yes, if it's something you really, really are bent on doing, or maybe your [dog doesn't like being alone](#) well, this podcast is going to help you prepare. But I still stick to my first advice. Don't do it.

Okay, first thing we have to do is we have to keep dogs safe. So, here's some tips to make sure your dog is safe. Number one, [exercise that dog](#) the day of Halloween. There's going to be a lot of activity that night. Give them extra exercise during the day and some extra dog training because that's engagement from you so that they will be a little bit more relaxed. We're taking the edge off regardless, if they're group number one, two, or three dogs. Exercise.



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Number two, if you are like me and love your jack-o-lanterns, carved pumpkins, then maybe put a battery-operated candle or a flashlight in that pumpkin rather than a candle because dogs are curious and they're going to sniff and potentially they could get burned.

Number three way we want to keep our dogs safe is we want to [keep them away from candy](#). Because candy, chocolate is very toxic to dogs. And some candy, like a lot of chewing gums or breath mints have xylitol in it, which is deadly to dogs. So, we want to keep our dogs safe. Keep them as far away from the candy as possible.

But that leads me to the back half of this podcast episode where I'm going to give you a training plan. Of course, I can't tell you 'let's have a dog training event' without giving you a training plan for it. So, stick with me because that's coming up very soon.

Now, another reason why Halloween can be dangerous for dogs is it's freaking scary guys. Like it's meant to be a day that we put out all kinds of scary stuff. It's about ghosts and ghouls and goblins. What's a ghou? I don't know.

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I remember when I was a kid, one of our neighbors on our street, they had an actual coffin in their living room. And they had loudspeakers that they played the scariest music, and the mother was dressed up as Dracula's wife, and they had a vampire that would open the door.

You had to knock on the coffin and then this coffin would open and then the body inside would give you your candy. Like it was scary stuff. So, it's meant to be a scary holiday, which is really why I suggest that dogs stay home.

But kids dress up in really scary costumes. Like for a dog, this is a scary costume because it's different than what I'm used to seeing. And it's really difficult to [prepare dogs for that](#). So, it can be dangerous. Some dogs get scared and run off.

So, let's jump into the dog training to keep our dogs safe and to make sure that October 31st, for those of you who live in countries that celebrate Halloween, October 31st is going to be a big cumulation of an event.

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Think of like, you know, the summer bikini bod event where you work up to, I've never done that either. Okay. So, bad example. But you get it. That a lot of people build up to, they want their body to look the best come the beginning of summer. I think I'm going on an off ramp right now, but you get what I'm saying.

We want to do some dog training so that October 31st, we put our dogs in a position where they can either relax or enjoy the event with you. But either way they're going to be safe. So, let's jump into the dog training of this.

First of all, our group of dogs that don't want any part of this. They want to be away from the action. Like my family pet, it was like, "Oh yeah, someone's at the door. I can't be bothered."

But some dogs really have anxiety about the kids, the screaming, the doorbell ringing continuously. Let's help all dogs right now. My team has put together a little poster that you can print off and put it over your doorbell. And it's the day that we're going to tell a little white lie.



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I mean, we could say “don't knock.” But like, let's not scare the kids with our signs, right? So, we're just going to say, “Doorbell broke, sing trick or treat.” And so, that way the dog doesn't have to hear the doorbell going off all the time. They don't have to hear the knocking of the doors.

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Now, you may not have a dog that's afraid or barks hysterically every time someone comes to the door, then have at it. You can have them ring your bell. Although it might be fun to get them to sing trick or treat. But for those of you who do, we do have a protocol that I went through on [podcast episode number 240](#). So, be sure to circle back to that one.

So, for our group number one dogs. Now, if they're dogs that you know, “I just don't care, but I don't really want to be around anyone.” They can go in the room furthest away from the front door. You can turn on the TV or put on some music, some white noise.

You can give them some food games, like maybe an [interactive food puzzle](#) or put some stuffed [Toppls](#) in there for them to work on during what you're going to be an hour, maybe two hours giving out candy. Any more than that, just turn off the lights. You have my permission for that one.

Now, if you have a dog who is going to be in the back room, but you know they're anxious about the doorbell. You know, they're anxious about kids. They're going to be a little bit unhappy. Then of course, as I mentioned off the top, we're going to get them exercised, [do some extra training](#) with them during that day.

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And then see if you can invite a friend over that can sit and watch TV with your dog. It's only going to be an hour or two. Friend, relative, hang out, maybe then if you know somebody's going to be with your dog, you can plant food around the room for your dog to find, like just get them going, [doing something](#). Takes their mind away from what's going on at the front door.

Okay, we got our group one dogs. Let's talk about our group three dogs. These are the dogs that you want to take trick or treating with you. First of all, please [don't take a puppy](#) out trick or treating or a young dog because it might not be so bad when you first start out, but you might get into the middle of it.

And with all of the flying ghosts and goblins and pumpkins, your dog might just have had enough. And you might be right in the middle of it where the kids are screaming down the streets, you can't get home in a way that keeps that dog safe.

The anxiety is just going to get higher. Unless you've really done a lot of really good dog training ahead of time. What does that dog training look like? Well, the first you'll do what I'm about to suggest for the group two dogs. The dogs that we want to kind of be part of the celebration. First of all, ask yourself, do you think your dog wants to be part of the activities? If your dog is okay with it, it's a great time.

You're going to be at the door for an hour or two anyway, so let's do some carry-on dog training while you're there. That dog training is going to start of course long before, maybe the day before, maybe the week before, maybe a month before. We're going to be [conditioning](#), which is an actual training where the dog gets to choose something.

We're going to condition the dog to costumes. So, I might put this halfway over my face and throw my dog some cookies or put it all the way over and throw my dog some cookies. Whatever costume you're going to be wearing to decorations that you're going to be having around the house.



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Don't just assume your dog is going to be fine with the blow-up air thing that I don't know what this looks like right now, but I bet it looks really dorky, but you know what I mean. So, don't assume that your dogs are going to be okay with that. What are the sights? What are the sounds? What are the smells?

So, of course, children are going to be in costumes and it's going to be hard to counter condition those unless you have kids that you can dress up, but then the dog already knows it's their kids.

So, you can go the day of Halloween, get your dog out when kids are going to school and a lot of them will be dressed up on their way to school or when they get out for recess. If you live near a school, you can walk your dog around there.

Now, counter conditioning doesn't mean stop the children and say, "Hey, can you just say boo in my dog's face?" Counter conditioning is staying a safe distance, keeping your dog under threshold. So, we help your dogs to think of those kids as white noise. "Yeah, they're dressed up weird. It's okay. It's just white noise."

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That's the goal of counter conditioning. So, your dog training begins with counter conditioning, and then we're going to do some dog training in preparation for Halloween night. First thing up, ItsYerChoice. Why? We want your dog not thinking of stealing candy.

Now, if you have little people in your home, those children are probably going to have a [cookie in their hand](#) at some point. So, this is probably an ongoing thing for you to teach your dog. "This is off boundaries. You don't go and steal from the kids' hands. You don't steal anything from the kids' hands."

But especially if those kids are going to be having Halloween candy because chocolate, xylitol, not things we want our dogs to have. Candy in any amount is not something we want our dogs to have. Start with ItsYerChoice the way it's trained. And if you don't know how to play ItsYerChoice, I will get my team to put a link in the show notes to our [ItsYerChoice Summit](#).

A great way to start. It's a hundred percent free. You can start your training palooza heading towards October 31st with the ItsYerChoice Summit.

So, we want the dogs to understand cookies in my hand, you might have like those plastic pumpkins that you're going to put cookies in, and you'll put their treats in it, but don't give out the dog treats at Halloween. Let's not make that mistake.

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So, you're not going to be a favorite neighbor if you do that, honestly. We're going to have those pumpkins filled with dog treats that eventually will have different candies in there. You might have dog treats in your pocket. I bet this has happened to one or two of you. Dog treats in your pocket, put it over a kitchen chair and play ItsYerChoice with the cookies in the pocket.

Dogs aren't to eat holes in the bottom of your pocket just because they're hung over a kitchen chair. So, ItsYerChoice, great game to play and continue to grow leading up to October 31st. But guess what's after October 31st?

Well, for our American friends, it's Thanksgiving and then we have Christmas. So, this is a perfect time to get your dog in dog training amazement because you're leading into really important holidays. Just



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as a side note, I do have another podcast. [Podcast episode 128](#), that is how to decrease stress for your pet for the holiday. So, that would be another great one to review.

So, we've done our conditioning. You've played ItsYerChoice. Now we're going to do [Crate Games](#). So, for our dog who is going to be in a back bedroom, if they're really more comfortable in their crate, brush up their Crate Games and then you can just put them in the crate. Give them a Toppl and close the crate for the hour or two that you're giving out the candy.

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Crate Games is going to lead us to a better Hot Zone. So, don't skip Crate Games. You want your dog to understand that they stay in their crate, or they stay in their Hot Zone because that's our next game. They stay in their Hot Zone until you give them the release word.

Now, Hot Zone is what is going to allow your dog to be there with you while you give out candy. Not like right at the door, but back from the door. Maybe I don't know, six to 10 feet. I have a Hot Zone that's permanently there for my dogs. You can go to podcast episode 240, where I give you the step-by-step protocol on how to teach your dogs to not bark at the door by using a remote feeder and the Hot Zone.

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So, that is something that you can review before Halloween evening. What we want is for you to be able to work your magic at the door with the kids. The dogs are back there on their Hot Zone, and you can give the candies to the kids, throw the odd cookie to your dog, or if you have a remote feeder, you can use that.

If you don't, you can still play the game. You're just tossing treats. Don't. Now listen to crazy Aunt Susan. Do not do what I do. Don't mix up, giving the dog cookies to the children. Keep those baskets separate.

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Some of you might want to dress your dogs up a little bit. Maybe put a funny bow tie or a cape or a full-on costume. Some dogs love to get dressed up for Halloween. Other dogs, they don't find it too appealing.

My dog Tater Salad is crazy about dress up. But for my other dogs, I have to gradually increase their confidence in wearing crazy clothing if that's something that I want to do. And it's great for photos, so I do, do it.

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And if you would like to know how to do that, jump over to YouTube because I have a live all about Halloween costumes and getting our dogs prepared for Halloween dress up. So, if that's something that you want to include in your Halloween preparation, here's some more training for you.

It's over there [on YouTube](#). And while you're there, if you're not a subscriber, please hit the subscribe button. And if you're watching this video on YouTube, I'd love for you to hit the like button while you're here.

And the fifth and final thing, this is optional, but it'd be fun if you taught your dog [a couple of tricks](#). I would say two or three tricks because while they're in their Hot Zone, you can pick a group of children every now and again. And if they say, "Oh, I love dogs." Get your dog to wave from the Hot Zone, or maybe turn on the spot in the Hot Zone.



If you could teach a few tricks that the dog can do from afar, then that just adds the fun of trick or treating both for you because you get to do some dog training, for the dog because they're a little bit more involved in what's going on. And the kids who are learning that dogs are cool, and they can be taught to do really cool things.

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So, there you have it. We want to keep our dogs number one, safe for Halloween. But if you think that's something your dog would like, I've given you the steps that you can actually involve your dog in the process of Halloween. And if you don't have Halloween, or if you're like me, you don't get trick or treaters, that doesn't mean you can't be part of the big dog training palooza countdown leading up to October 31st.

And if you'd like to learn more about how to decrease your dog stress during any holiday season, be sure to check out Shaped by Dog episode number 128, because that is a good one. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Get Crate Games Online:

<https://get.crategames.com/>

Learn To Play ItsYerChoice:

<https://recallers.com/iycsummit-join/>

Resources:

[YouTube Live](#)

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

[YouTube Video: 15 Ways To Exercise Your Dog](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 79: Reduce Anxiety and Grow Your Dog's Confidence with These Pro Dog Training Tips](#)

[Podcast Episode 240: Stop Barking Dogs! Step-By-Step Action Plan And Anti-Bark Strategies To Avoid](#)

[Nina Ottoson Food Puzzles](#)

[Toppl Dog Toy](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 199: Puppy Fear Periods: Help For Socializing Puppies Or Rescue Dogs Scared Of People](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 128: Reduce Stress For Dogs During Holiday Celebrations](#)

[Podcast Episode 68: 3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know](#)



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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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