

AMERICAN HERITAGE

GERMAN SHEPHERD DOGS

Floppy Ears

- Judy Shuford

German Shepherd puppies are born with floppy ears. Some ears will stand up as early as 6 weeks, while others may flop down for up to 6 months. During this time it is not uncommon for a puppy's ears to stand up one day and flop down the next; due in part to the additional head motion of teething (typically at 4-6 months of age).

If a puppy's ears have stood up and later flop back down, taping is not generally recommended. However, if their ears have not stood up before the age of 5 months, we typically recommend you consider "taping" their ears to help support the developing cartilage and ensure proper conformation. If you feel your puppy falls into this latter category, there are several methods for "taping" a puppy's ear.

Before following any method to correct floppy ears, we strongly encourage you to consult a veterinarian to evaluate your puppy's ear health. Be selective in the method you choose, as there are several methods, some of which can encourage moisture building in your puppy's ears creating a welcoming environment for infections. Regardless of the method you choose, we recommend that you continue to monitor your puppy's ears several times a day while you are helping their ears to stand up.

We have found the following method to be very effective and safe for our puppies as it allows for virtually normal air circulation within the ear, and does not require the use of rigid objects that could harm the puppy.

Supplies:

3M General Purpose 45 spray adhesive (Hardware store)

1/2 thick foam pipe insulation (Hardware store)

Paper tape (from local pharmacy, bandage section)

Directions:

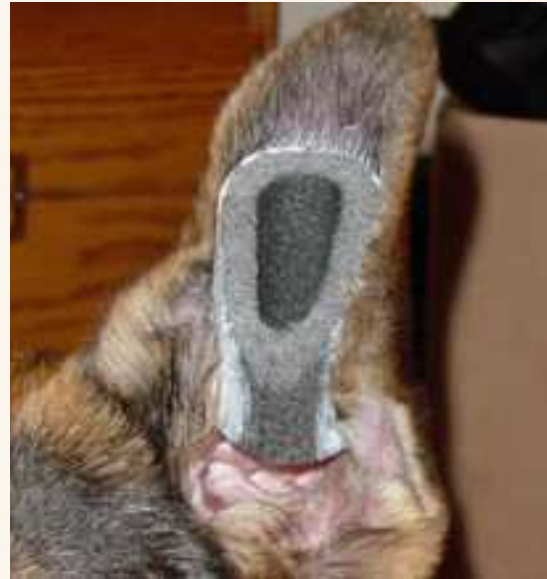
1. Cut the foam insulation to fit from the base of the puppy's ear (where their ear meets their head – not inside the ear itself) to approximately one inch below the tip of their ear. Be sure you are supporting equally on both sides of the natural fold of the ear (the fold being where the puppy's ear is "flopping" down – this is the cartilage you are trying to strengthen). The typical length of foam is 2 ½ - 4 inches depending on the size of the puppy's ear. See pictures below.
2. Test fit the foam insulation and trim any excess foam that will not be in contact with the puppy's ear. This helps to eliminate unnecessary weight that could pull the ear forward and also encourages virtually normal air circulation within their ears.
3. Apply the spray adhesive to the foam as per manufacturer's recommendations, and firmly place the foam into the puppy's ear.

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4. LOOSELY wrap paper tape around the puppy's ear and foam pipe to help secure this "bandage" for 1-2 days. Do not wrap the tape tight, as this may cause their ear to swell.

The foam will naturally come loose from the ear anytime between 3 days to 1 week, depending upon how active your puppy is. If the ear still appears to need support after the first attempt, you can easily repeat the process one or two more times. We have found that most ears will be standing up strong by after the second attempt.



Be careful when playing with your puppy's ears. You can massage their ears to get your puppy accustomed to being handled; however, you can damage the fragile cartilage during growth if you are too rough. Once the cartilage is broken, you may not be able to encourage the ears to stand on their own.

If you have any questions, or even suggestions please feel free to contact me at judy@ahgsd.com