



Barking

Dogs bark for many reasons. When barking is a nuisance, figuring out the reason or reasons that the dog is barking will help you understand how to change the behavior.

- **Attention seeking-** Dogs who have received attention in the past, will resort to barking for attention. Even if the dog was scolded for barking in the past, if he was being ignored while he was quiet and then received attention while barking, he will continue barking.
- **Stress-** Dogs who are stressed or unsure may vocalize. Anxiety can be mild, moderate or severe. If anxiety is moderate to severe, please consult with a behaviorist. Mild anxiety can be decreased:
 - ✓ With confidence building exercises
 - ✓ Using positive training methods
 - ✓ Changing the environment to reduce stress
 - ✓ Providing structure for the dog
 - ✓ Changing the way the dog perceives what is causing him anxiety by turning into something he looks forward too.
- **Alerting-** What your dog considers a threat or danger may be drastically different than what you perceive to be a threat or danger. We can teach them what response we would like, but some responses are instinctual. Also, please be consistent. Do you encourage your dog to bark at strangers but become frustrated when your dog barks at Aunt Judy who only visits one time per year? The mixed message is confusing to your dog!
- **Everyday vocalizations-** Some dogs just have a lot to say! Try putting it on cue- If you teach your dog to “Speak” and “Quiet” then you are setting the rules for when and how long the dogs bark. This helps eliminate excessive barking. The "Speak" and "Quiet" Command cue go hand in hand.

To teach “quiet” cue-

Have a squeaky toy and treats ready. Set up an instance when you know that your dog will bark, such as having someone ring the doorbell. You can even download the sound of a doorbell ringing, if you do not have someone to stand outside and ring the bell.

Ring bell, as soon as your dog barks, you squeak toy to interrupt bark, the second that the barking stops, you say "Good!" then toss a treat. Make sure you do this immediately so the dog cannot start barking again.

Once dog is consistently ceasing to bark when she hears the squeak, you can begin adding the cue “Quiet”. You will first do this at the same time you make the toy squeak, and then you will gradually fade out the toy and simply use the command” Quiet”. Example-

Beginner: Bell rings, dog barks, squeak the toy, dog is quiet, you say “good” and reward.

With practice: Bell rings, dog barks, squeak toy AND say “quiet”, dog is quiet, you say “good” and reward

Expert-Bell rings, dog barks, you say” Quiet”, dog is quiet, you say “good” and reward

To teach the "Speak" command –

When your dog barks, you say "Good" then toss a treat.

As dog starts to catch on that it's bark is making food come around, you will begin to say the vocal command "Speak" JUST BEFORE the dog begins to bark.

After the bark, you mark with "good!" then toss food reward.

Next reward only if your dog waits to hear the cue "Speak" before barking. Then you can practice "Speak" Followed by "Quiet!" and back and forth.

Once the cue is established, only reward for the bark when you give the command. If the dog barks off cue, you can incorporate "Quiet" or give the dog a short "time out".



- **Lack of impulse control/frustration-** Teach your dog a little bit about self-control. Sit/ stay and down/stay are useful cues. Pairing play with settling exercises can also be beneficial. Begin with a "sit", then play for 15 seconds, then have the dog "sit" and give the dog a 30 second relaxing massage, then play again for 15 seconds. Repeat. This teaches the dog self-control. When you first begin the exercise, having the dog on leash will help. In addition to relaxing massage, handling options include: touching ears, paws, collar, tail etc...
- **Joining the crowd-** Having more than one dog may mean twice the noise. Teaching each dog a "settle" cue, working individually on calming exercises and then together. Always be sure to give each dog one on one attention at least once a day.
- **Excitement-** frequently before a walk, feeding or anything else that your dog enjoys. If you want to eliminate this type of behavior, wait for the moment your dog stops barking and then proceed.
- **Boredom-** Providing mental and physical exercise can decrease barking that is due to boredom.
- **Environment-** Change your set up, sometimes management is one of the most efficient ways to reduce barking.

Some examples of environment management problems and solutions:

Problem-Is your dog left loose in the house while you are at work in front of a big open window that receives a lot of foot traffic?

Solution- Allow access to that room only when you are home, so you can reward quiet behaviors. When you are not at home, either crate or confine your dog in a room with less of a view.

Problem-Does your dog bark when outside at people who pass by?

Solution- Never leave dog outside unattended, this will prevent frustration and promote safety. When outside with your dog, reward him as soon as someone is walking within sight, before your dog can react.

Problem- Does your dog bark when he sees other dogs on walks?

Solution- Take a group class that uses positive training methods. He can learn a more appropriate response when he sees a dog. Consider socializing your dog off leash with other dogs. If you are not sure if your dog is social and need help with this, contact one of our recommended trainers.

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