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Banish Barking!

Simple techniques to eliminate your dog's excessive barking

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Excessive barking is one of the most frustrating and common problems dog parents face. Unlike other unpleasant behaviors such as chewing on furniture or going to the bathroom in the house, barking can impact those beyond a pet parent's immediate household, disturbing neighbors and potentially resulting in warnings and fines from local authorities. Not to mention the fact that excessive barking is simply annoying.

To help remedy this irritating behavior, pet parents must first understand what is causing their four-legged friend to bark. Dogs can bark to release stress or they can bark just for the fun of it; however a majority of barking problems are classified as barking for attention, barking out of loneliness and boredom, and barking at the doorbell or passersby.

Scolding your dog may seem like the most effective technique in halting this behavior, but most dogs will gladly accept the negative attention, further reinforcing the barking behavior. Some dogs may even consider yelling as a form of barking back.

While it is unrealistic to expect your dog to never bark, there are easy training techniques pet parents can use to manage barking.

Barking For Attention

Barking for attention is the most common barking problem and often the most irritating as this behavior often occurs near the pet parent. This is normally a self-taught behavior that is reinforced when you react to these barking pleas for attention by petting, playing, or providing a treat. This may be a quick fix to stop the barking, but it is actually training your dog that by barking they will get their desired response, your attention.

To alleviate your dog's urge to bark for attention try the following:

- Resist the urge to acknowledge the barking at all costs, do not say anything or look in their direction. If necessary stand up and walk away from them.
- Give your dog plenty of praise, treats and attention when they are quiet and calm in your presence.

- Provide your dog with plenty of toys to occupy their time when you cannot give them attention.
- The key to eliminating your dog's attention barking behavior is to persistently ignore this method of begging and reward them for exhibiting the desired quiet behavior.

Barking Out of Loneliness and Boredom

Dogs are extremely social creatures with short attention spans. They are prone to being lonely and bored when left alone for extended periods of time—typically three hours or more. The reaction for most dogs in this situation is to bark excessively in an attempt to alert their pet parent that they desire to be near them or want some form of entertainment. This type of barking is often seen when dogs are left home alone, isolated from the family while in the home or when their surroundings and toys are no longer interesting enough to keep them occupied.

To remedy your dog's urge to bark out of loneliness and boredom try the following:

- Provide your dog with attention by playing with them and allowing them to socialize with the family as often as possible.
- When left alone, occupy their time with a variety of toys, especially those that are designed to hide treats as they will keep your dog busy for longer periods of time. Try freezing treats inside hollow, stuffable chew toys once your dog has mastered how to retrieve them for longer lasting entertainment.
- Provide your dog with ample exercise to naturally lower their tendencies to become lonely or bored when left alone.

Some dogs may exhibit extreme stress when separated from their pet parent, requiring alternative measures to be taken. Pet parents who feel their dog may feel stressed when left alone can calm these behaviors with a pheromone based product such as **Comfort Zone*** with D.A.P.* (Dog Appeasing Pheromone). Comfort Zone* is clinically proven to reduce excessive barking due to separation from pet parent by as much as 65 percent.

Barking at the Doorbell and Passersby

Many dogs possess a natural urge to alert their pet parents of potential threats, intruders and sudden changes to their environment. As most pet parents know, nearly every dog demonstrates this behavior when the doorbell rings. This "watchdog" nature is favorable for most family dogs but can become an



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annoyance if the behavior is relentless toward every person who approaches or passes by the home. Most dogs exhibiting these tendencies also have a problem with continuing to bark at guests who enter the home. Properly training your dog how to express their inner watchdog will halt this common barking issue and will help with general manners around company.

To calm your dog's urge to bark at the doorbell and passersby try the following:

- Establish a place for your dog to go when the doorbell rings or people approach the home by placing a small rug or mat near the front door area. You will also want to put a jar of treats near by so that you have rewards readily available for your dog.
- Have a friend approach the front door and ring the doorbell. When your dog goes running to the door grab a treat from the treat jar. Let her bark a couple of times, then try to lure her with her special treats over to the floor mat, ask her to sit and give her a few treats for her quiet, calm behavior. Then calmly go sit back down and resume what you were doing before the bell rang. — Notice you didn't answer the door.
- Repeat this training exercise until your dog automatically sits quietly on the mat when the doorbell rings or when people approach the home.
- Repeat the exercise but now crack the door after your dog is quietly sitting on the mat and reward them for remaining on the mat. You may have to guide your dog back to the mat and ask them to sit again. Repeat this training exercise until your dog remains on the mat when the door is cracked.
- Finally, repeat having a friend ring the doorbell. If your dog remains on the mat quietly, open the door and let your guest enter the home. Reward your dog with a treat for staying on the mat, coaxing them back if needed. Your guest should also offer a treat if your dog stays on the mat. Repeat this step until your dog remains quietly on the mat even when guests enter the home.

By consistently following the training exercises outlined in this article, pet parents can make barking issues a thing of the past. While these easy-to-follow training techniques will solve

most barking problems, some extreme cases may be more severe, requiring the help of a professional dog trainer. Professional dog trainers can help pet parents identify the cause of common behavioral barking problems, demonstrate training techniques and conduct specialized training to eliminate excessive barking. As a general rule I recommend you look for trainers who use reward-based training methods and avoid electronic training tools.

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