

## BARKEOLOGY

### *Study of Canine Communications*

#### WHY DO DOGS BARK?

Dogs bark (or vocalize) to communicate a message. They bark for a variety of other reasons: to alert, out of boredom, to get attention or for the sheer enjoyment of expressing themselves.

Barking is kindred to a human talking. As humans, we can express ourselves in a variety of different ways with our voice: laugh, whisper, talk, cry, shout, babble, nag, sing and whistle. We can do this in a tangential, offensive or boring manner, or we can be receptive, reasonable and responsive (listening, as well as talking).

#### COMMUNICATION IS A TWO WAY CONNECTION

When humans communicate, they usually expect some kind of response. Barking dogs do too! If they don't get it, they will resoundingly bark even more. With this, most dogs are met with a reprimand and/or forced to stop barking (confinement in a faraway place, verbal or physical reprimand). *This is counterproductive, can be abusive, and damage the relationships between dog and dog parent.*

Metaphorically, it would be like us having a strong piece of duct tape put over our mouth, then placed in a dark room. If you couldn't speak, how would you communicate your emotions, wants, needs, desires and frustrations? How would you engage someone in conversation, activities or play? How would you develop your social skills? Perhaps, you would use improvisation by miming, jumping, drawing, and making frantic bodily gestures. We all need interaction with another living being or risk suffering severe deprivation and possible insanity (Wackadoodle).

## SHAPE THE BARKING

Dogs already know how to eat, sit, stand, lie down, jump, paw, lick, play and roll over at 3 weeks of age. They are extraordinarily adept at developing survival and defense mechanisms to cope. They know instinctively how to bark, whine, or yodel.

As human companions, we are not teaching them how to do what comes naturally, although it might boost our egos. We are shaping when, where, at who and for how long we want them to bark. We teach them savvy **socialization and manners (SAM)**.

Dogs are social animals by nature. Barking comes naturally. When they join our human families, barking can be put on cue.

Dogs usually won't bark unless they are left in a position that incites barking: alone on a cable run, loose in the yard, chained to a dog house, in a basement, in a kennel or crate for too long a time - or out on a walk with unfamiliar situations, sights, sights and exciting smells.

These imposed situations create droning barking dogs. It is a losing battle between owner and dog. Barking becomes an insidious habit, oftentimes to get attention. For example: a dog left on a cable run, where they can view but not interact freely with children and other dogs will create a barking dog. Children romping back and forth along the side of the dog (on or off of a cable run) will create a jumping, barking dog. The dog is set up for failure when they are allowed into the home. The outcome is a jumping, barking dog in the home: exactly the way they were taught outside!

## FORGIVE YOURSELF PUT BARKING ON CUE

Pretend you are the Maestro of a symphony orchestra. Remember that dogs have to bark, so eliminating barking is not a fair objective. The goal is to orchestrate where, how long, at whom and when you want your dog to perform their "barking symphony". Use barking as a reward. Shape the barking, tout-suite. That is, when they stop with a "Shush" or "Quiet", "Thank You, Good."

**Begin with awareness. Focus** on rewarding the behavior you desire (quiet) rather than reinforcing the barking by responding to it.

**Redirect** to a more appropriate, quiet behavior like "Get your toy or ball" or "Come here and sit."

**Timing is essential.** If you wait, you have missed the opportunity to capture a magical moment in directing the musical agenda (barking).

Snap-shoot all good behaviors, including quiet when the dog (puppy) offers them. These behaviors are learned more quickly.

**Get motivated!** Consider shaping barking as a challenge. The game is to strategize what, when, where and how long you want your dog to bark. Be flexible because this will never be perfect. Dogs will inevitably bark at chipmunks, squirrels and other stimuli in *new* environmental locations.

**Back Presentation: One of the easiest ways to temporarily halt an annoying behavior (barking, jumping, mouthing) is to ignore it. Turn around and present your "back" to your dog. Walk away if necessary. Zoom back the second your dog stops barking and praise. Stressed out? Take a deep nose-to-navel belly breath.**

## TURN IT INTO A JOB

Our Newfie Journey was a barky, mouthy and energetic puppy / adolescent (up to three years). We have lived with six Newfies, so it could be our age. And, she is smart.

Journey was taught to carry her leash, a stuffed toy or ball. We gave her a job to do.

## WHISPER

Changing our voice inflection (tone) and familiar patters, especially the ones that are not working, matters! Try “whispering” or using a “clicker” when they are quiet for even a few seconds. The expression is precious. The clicker clarifies and marks the behavior (quiet) quickly.

## CALM THE CHAOS

Sometimes less is better, so keep it simple. Calm will inspire calm. If you dog is barking like a banchee, rather than joining in, rewarding the barking, by yelling, softly say “Good bark, thank you, now Quiet”. Distract, redirect them away from barking, “Get your Ball and come Sit”.



Channel barking into a positive outlet like teaching “speak” and “shush”.

Use your hand like a talking puppet to signal a bark. Use your finger over your lips, or other creative gestures, to request “Quiet”.

Use *life rewards* (food, touch, toys and play) to train behaviors.

If you feed your dog 2X a day, you have 14 training opportunities every week to train (watch-me, sit, down, stay and gently), and reshape annoying behaviors like barking and jumping.



**Dog Talk**  
Training and Wellness  
Sanctuary LLC

**BARKING!**  
Canine Communication

*Awareness*  
*Balance*  
*Relationship*  
*Education*  
*Well-Being*



24 Tenney Road  
Pelham, NH 03076  
603-635-DOGS (3647)