

# HOW TO QUIET A BARKING DOG!

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Our best friend can be Noisy. Our dogs bark as a right of communication passage. That's how they communicate emotions (fear, anxiety, excitement, discomfort, alert).

It wouldn't be reasonable to expect your dog never to bark, nor would it even be desirable. Your dog's barking may be for anxiety, loneliness, boredom, fear, or because it feels good! They see it as their job. It can be **CONDITIONED** to – by **US!** OH YES!

Excessive barking, and/or, what we perceive is at the “wrong” times might be, to the dog, normal.

## **Identify the Trigger**

Doorbell rings, BARK! Knock at door, WOOF! UPS delivery WOOF, BARK, WOOF! Dogs, regardless of size, may see people or other animals as encroachers on their territory. Whatever the “trigger” ...

## **Don't Bark Back at, or with, Your Dog**

When you're frustrated, you might be tempted to raise your voice. Although a reflex action, try to resist barking in harmony with the dog. Dogs see us as their leaders, parents, higher uppers, their pack! They might think you're joining in on the barking. That might cause more barking. Instead, speak in a low, calm voice and **REDIRECT**.

## **Keep It Simple; Be Proactive; Redirect**

Dogs can be trained to recognize words like **QUIET**, **ENOUGH**, **SHUSH**. Teach this **BEFORE** the barking serenade begins. This helps manage barking. Redirect: More often the barking is satisfying and begins before we can step in. Be proactive: Teach & practice before it happens. Simulate the experience. We have a doorbell in the training sanctuary. Ding Ding, dog gets to bark a few times, then **SHUSH & SIT**. You can teach bark with a hand signal putting it on **CUE**. Finger over lips – **SHUSH**. Be Aware! Look around. Get ready – redirect – use a leash when practicing so it's meaningful.

## **Reward Good Behavior**

Dogs don't understand that their barking is annoying. So, redirecting to **YOU** with healthy treats and a Watch-Me, Sit is a fair way to say, “I got this – thanks for your help”. When your dog is calm, be mindful to reward for the quiet.

## **Exercise, Games, Interactive Enrichment**

Exercise eases your, and the dog's, tension. A dog that gets exercise, focused play and basic manners training is a calmer dog. Try timing an exercise session right before problem barking times. As a bonus, you get some exercise too.

## **Nip the Barking in the Bud**

Trust your instincts, check your habits. This can include our dogs. The longer a dog gets to bark “whenever”, the more ingrained the habit will become. It's best to focus on barking issues sooner, rather than later to avoid “habitual” barking.

## **Ignore the Barking**

You can try – but must be vigilant. That’s not easy. If barking causes a response from you (attention), or others (neighbors) it can be inadvertently rewarding. Shaping the behavior (barking and quiet) makes more sense for a better quality of life.

## **Educational Enrichment – Games – Toys – Puzzles**

Educational enrichment sets the dog up for success. When you must leave them alone, or at busy times of day, drop the blinds, close the door, and occupy your dog with a favorite toy, puzzle, Kong (Wobbler) stuffed with healthy food or treats. Watch the calories! Dogs can learn self-control if you begin slowly desensitizing them by leaving them alone in a crate or confined area beginning with 10-15 minutes, then extend when ready.

## **Limit Exposure to Stimuli to Reduce Dog Barking**

For territorial barkers, limit exposure to external stimuli by keeping window shades closed or by installing privacy fencing for outdoor pets. Dogs have keen hearing, so they might still be stimulated by the sounds of people or animals intruding on their territory, but limited exposure will help to prevent their anxiety/barking.

## **Hire Someone to Check on Your Dog**

Dogs are pack animals. Their desire for companionship is strong. We need to go out w/o our dogs sometimes. Consider hiring a dog walker to check in and walk him/her.

## **Time for a Wellness Check**

Barking is normal behavior in dogs, but there's a chance that excessive vocalization could indicate a medical issue. If your formerly quiet dog has taken to vocalizing, it is a good idea to schedule a wellness check with your Vet.

## **Call for Professional Help**

If a dog is leash reactive or fearful, call for a professional trainer/behaviorist. This will avoid escalating into a bite (you or others) or making the behavior worse. The last thing a fearful, reactive dog needs is to be made more excited. *International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants.*

***Enjoy the Journey!***

