

Barking

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There are several types of barking dogs may engage in:

1. **Excited play/alert barking** from a well-balanced, friendly, often young dog. Dog's tail is loosely wagging and dog's facial features and eyes are soft. Ears may go up and down but are soft. Dog may even do some play bows and jump around. The dog's barks are well formed, separate and do not run together.
2. **Fearful/alarm barking** and warning growls from an under-socialized dog. Dog's body posture is backward or ready to shift at a moments notice. Dog's eyes may be dilated with hackles up and ears back. Hackles may be up the entire length of the dogs back. Dog's tail is down and may even be slightly wagging in a hard swish. Dog may try to hide behind owner. Bark pattern is almost rapid-fire at times. If the dog shows his teeth, his lips are pulled back to reveal the back teeth.
3. **Learned barking** to get attention from a "bossy" dog. Dog barks at owner rather than at other dogs or people. Will generally bark more, jump on or grab the owner if ignored. Dogs will do this at home to get the owner to open a door, give attention, treats or play with them.
4. **Dominance/territorial barking** and growling. This is usually from an intact male dog of a naturally protective breed (Rottweiler, Akita, German Shepherd etc.). Dog's body posture is very upright, tight and forward. Hackles may be up at the shoulders only. Ears and tail are up and tail may be barely moving in an upright, tight fashion. Dog may purse his lips forward to give a low rumbling growl. If the lips are lifted, only the front teeth are shown. The dog will not do a lot of movement but may give quick outbursts of aggression at movement by the dog or person he is focusing on or may direct aggression toward the owner if they give him a reprimand or a correction for his behavior. The dog will appear to be staring at other dogs or people. Barks are deep and may have a roaring quality to them.
5. **Boredom barking.** Some breeds of dogs are more inclined to bark, whine or howl out of sheer boredom, dementia or senility. If your trainer has determined that your dog is barking, howling or whining for an unknown reason, a veterinarian should examine him. In addition to mental afflictions, many dogs exhibiting "unexplained" barking are physically ill. If a veterinarian finds a medical reason for the barking (dental disease, urinary tract infections, anal gland impaction, ear infections - see W. Campbell's better behavior in dogs), the veterinarian should help the dog first before the trainer attempts to modify the dogs behavior.

Solutions

Always determine the dog's threshold for barking behavior before training. There is no benefit to placing the dog in a situation where he/she is incapable of not barking and then trying to train the dog to be quiet. There are thresholds of various stimuli such as space, activity and/or particular individuals. For example:

- *A dog may be able to remain calm 20 feet from a quiet, calm dog.
- *A dog may not be able to remain quiet 10 feet from that same quiet, calm dog.
- *A dog may not be able to remain quiet 30 feet from that dog if he's moving.
- *A dog may not be able to remain quiet within 50 feet of any cat doing anything!

Therefore, you must work with the dog, rewarding the quiet behavior beyond his barking threshold. Slowly decrease the dog's threshold, increasing rewards as the exercise becomes more difficult.

If you must "correct" the dog for barking, it should occur no more than once out of every 10 exposures to the thing the dog is barking at. This should avoid having him make a negative association to the person or dog he's barking at. A negative association may lead to aggression. The dog should then be lavishly rewarded for not barking. Ideally, he should be rewarded when he's looking at the owner, not the distraction.

Squirt Bottles:

Water: Many dogs dislike a direct spray of water into their face. When your dog barks, use a high-powered squirt bottle, on "spray" and squirt them directly in the face. Say "quiet" then praise and reward.

Water/Vinegar Mix: Some dogs were bred as "water dogs" (Labs, Golden Retrievers, Poodles, Portuguese Water Dogs), when you spray these dogs with water they look at it more as a reward than a punishment. For this reason, mix 2 parts water with 1 part vinegar before you squirt your dog. Yes, they may smell like a salad, but it will stop the undesirable behavior.

Vinegar: For some dogs, the threat of the spray bottle itself isn't great enough a deterrent to stop the barking behavior. For these dogs, you may want to use a squirt bottle filled with 100% vinegar. You DO NOT spray the dog in the face with the vinegar. You put the bottle in the corner of the dog's mouth and spray. The strong taste of the vinegar directly in the dog's mouth is sufficient to stop even the most focused of barkers.

No matter which method works best, remember to pet, praise and reward proper behavior.

Bark Collars:

There are several different types of bark collars, and this is a short overview of each, and their positive and negative qualities:

Shock Collars: These are collars that rest on the dog's vocal chords and deliver a "mild" electric shock when the dog barks. For most dogs, these collars are extremely effective. However, many dogs realize that the collar itself is giving the correction, and need to wear the collar for the rest of their lives in order to be "cured". Another downside to these collars is that most people are gone from 6 to 8 hours a day. Wearing the collars for such an extended period of time will cause the dog to have electrical burns on their neck from the collar.

Citronella Collars: Extremely effective with most dogs, Citronella collars work in much the same way as the shock collars. The collar rests on the dog's vocal chords and delivers a direct spray of citronella into the dog's face when the dog

barks. For most dogs, the strong, yet harmless scent of the citronella spray deters further barking. Negative aspects of this collar are the price and the fact that some dogs realize if they turn their head, they can avoid the correction.

Sonic Collars: Sonic collars emit a high-pitched sound, painful to the dog's ears when it registers barking. This is an effective method to stop barking, but only in a single dog household. In a multiple dog household, or if there is a close neighbor with a barking dog, any close, loud noise will set off the collar and correct the dog. Also, if the dog is extremely focused, they may tune out the sound all together. This method is ineffective on deaf dogs for obvious reasons.

Surgical De-barking:

Surgical de-barking is when a veterinarian performs a surgery to cut or remove a dog's vocal chords. This should only be used as a last resort when all other attempts of correction have failed. Surgical debarking not only stops unwanted barking, but makes it impossible for your dog to make any sounds at all. It is often viewed as cruel, but if the choice is between putting the dog down, giving the dog up for adoption, or de-barking the dog, it may be in the dog's best interest. Be aware, if you are unable to prevent the dog from attempting to bark for up to 6 months after the surgery, scar tissue may build up on the dog's vocal chords and he may get his bark back.

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