

SINGING HIS SONG: THE BARKING DOG



Dogs bark for a lot of different reasons. Some breeds of dogs seem to enjoy being more vocal than others, such as hounds, collies, shelties, cocker spaniels, and beagles. Others feel they have to alert you to every possible danger such as the mailman approaching or just a leaf falling off the tree.



Some dogs are just bored. Being kept in the backyard all day long so they invent ways to keep themselves busy...by barking. Other dogs are very stressed by being left alone outside all day (cast out of the pack's den). These dogs exhibit stress by barking, digging, chewing and general destructiveness. By making your dog more a part of the family, your dog will become happier and less prone to these stress behaviors, including unwanted barking.

Outside stimulation such as neighbors working in their yard, being teased by a passerby, meter readers doing their job, etc., can also set your dog off barking each day. By bringing him inside to live, there is less for him to bark at.

What you want to teach your dog is that most of the time it is not acceptable to bark, such as in the dead of night, or all day long while you are gone. It is OK for your dog to bark when you are playing ball with him or playing another game. **IT IS NOT OK FOR YOUR DOG TO BARK AND LUNGE AT YOUR GUESTS, OR UPS MAN!!!** To allow your dog to do so is asking for trouble and Rover may soon take a bite out of them.

If you do like your dog to bark when people knock at your door, that is all right. **BUT YOU MUST BE ABLE TO CONTROL IT.** If Rover has barked twice at your mailman, and you have told him "QUIET" and he does not respond to you...but keeps on barking...**YOUR DOG IS OUT OF CONTROL!** Work on the quiet command as taught later in this handout.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE BARKING DOG

1. HANDS OFF YOUR DOG WHEN HE IS BEING VOCAL.

Any touching or soothing behavior you may try to do to your dog at this point will only reinforce the barking! Only touch or pet your dog when he is being still AND quiet.

2. DO NOT REWARD BARKING BEHAVIOR BY:

petting or touching your dog, picking him up (leave him on the floor), feeding your dog a treat or his dinner, opening the door for him because he is yelling at you, letting him out of his crate, or giving in to something that he may want (his walk, his cookie, his dinner, his car ride, etc.) Have him be quiet before you give him what he wants. Otherwise he has you emotionally blackmailed and he will use it often.

3. **REWARD SILENCE!!** This is the most important part of teaching your dog to be quiet. Each time your dog is quiet when normally he would bark, make sure you praise him vocally, with a pat or scratch, and/or with a treat. This is so he learns you like it a lot when there is silence in your house.

4. **BE CONSISTENT.** Every time your dog barks when it is not appropriate, you must give the command and use the tools for about the first six to eight weeks, after which, the command "QUIET" should be enough to stop the noise. If it does not, get your tools out and correct him so he knows you mean business every time you say that word!

5. **MAKE YOUR DOG A PART OF YOUR FAMILY.** Unacceptable behavior, like unwanted barking, is NEVER improved by isolating your dog to the backyard. In fact, that may be the reason why your dog is barking all the time...because he is very unhappy being left outside. Bring your dog inside while you are gone if that is the only time he is barking. He will feel more secure inside the house and less apt to bark.

If he is destructive while your are gone, then crate train him so he is prevented from being destructive. A dog is a pack animal and needs daily social interaction with his family. As a minimum, your dog should be kept in your house whenever you are home. If you have not taken your dog to training class, now is the time to do so. Pack animals need their pack and for better or for worse, you're it.

6. **PROVIDE PLENTY OF EXERCISE.** Before you leave your house for the day, give Fido a good romp with a ball or Frisbee. A tired dog is a good dog because then he is sleeping, not barking or being destructive. If your dog is being teased or upset by your neighbors, then build a secure, sight proof dog run in the middle of your yard, away from your fence.

7. **TIME OUTS.** Before you leave your dog alone, do not spend so much time with him that when it comes time for you to run errands or go to work on Monday, Fido is over-anxious at the thought of you leaving him. Deliberately ignore him for 20 to 30 minutes at least three times a day (pretend he is not there, do not pet him, say anything to him, or make direct eye contact, and just move away should he try to paw you, nudge you or crawl in your lap). Make sure your whole family participates in the time out periods or they are ineffective. Once he accepts these time outs calmly, go on to number eight.

8. **USE TIME BUFFERS.** Studies have shown that most dogs are at their destructive and vocal worst 20 minutes after you leave in the morning for work (Fido is stressed he has to

spend the day alone) and 20 minutes before you come home in the evening (Fido is getting geared up to see his favorite person!).

Time buffers teach the dog to settle down for the day and to remain unemotional when you first return home. Fifteen minutes before you need to leave the house in the morning, put your dog in his crate, dog run or room (wherever he is to spend the day) and ignore him. By all means, correct any barking or destructive behavior, but do not play with him or talk to him other than to correct misbehavior. When it is time for you to leave, just leave. Do not make a big deal out of it. A "Good bye, Rover. Have a nice day" is enough. What you are teaching your dog is to settle in for the day, and not get so emotional when you say good bye.

Now do just the reverse when you come home. Leave your dog in his day confinement (or if he is loose in the house, do not touch him, make direct eye contact, or talk to him) for fifteen minutes before greeting him. Correct any barking behavior but do nothing more. This will teach your dog that even though you have come home, there is a cooling off period before he can be greeted.

9. GIVE YOUR DOG SOMETHING TO DO WHILE YOU ARE GONE. If your dog is busy chewing, it's very unlikely he will be barking at the same time. Good chewing toys are Kongs stuffed with cheese, biscuits, peanut butter or any meat leftovers. Stuffing sterilized beef bones also works great. Put the special chew toy down just before you leave for the day and pick it up when you return home. Another good item to keep your dog busy is the Buster Cube. You fill it with your dogs ration of kibble and he has to work on it to receive his meal.

10. TRY SET UPS. A set up is where you do everything you would normally do if you were leaving for the day, such as putting the dog in his crate or room, getting your keys, your coat and walking out the door. The difference is you do not leave but wait just outside the door listening to see what your dog will do. If your dog starts howling or barking, you can quickly go back into your house, correct him with the "QUIET" command and a squirt bottle. Then you immediately leave again, only to stand just outside the door.

If you have a difficult case, you would wait for five minutes of continual silence and then return inside to your house. Wait inside for ten minutes then leave again to your spot just outside the door. Gradually you would build up to leaving your dog for 30 minutes with no barking or whining, again with you waiting just outside the door. Once you have built up to 30 to 60 minutes of a set up with no vocalizations, most dogs can usually be left safely for several hours without a problem.

11. DO NOT HIT, SLAP, PUNCH OR KICK, OR HOLD YOUR DOG'S MOUTH SHUT in the hopes that he will stop barking. Punishment such as this teaches your dog nothing except to fear you! Use the techniques described in this handout to teach your dog the "QUIET" command.

TEACHING THE QUIET COMMAND

TOOLS NEEDED:

- Binaca (human breath spray...available at any grocery store/drug store) and/or
- A squirt bottle, set on a straight stream (like a bullet)
- White vinegar or lemon juice (optional)

1. WHILE YOUR DOG IS BEING VOCAL, squirt him right up the nose with a water bottle set on a straight stream or spray the Binaca directly into his mouth. (For hard cases, use 20 to 30% of plain white vinegar or lemon juice to your squirt bottle.) You must squirt/spray your dog within five to ten seconds of him barking for it to be effective, and for him to learn from it. After the fact does you no good in curbing this behavior. Be consistent and use the squirt bottle each time he barks.

2. GIVE THE COMMAND "QUIET" ONLY ONCE, as you spray him directly in the nose, a couple of times. OR if you are using the Binaca, spray one time into his mouth (just lift a corner of his lip and spray it into his mouth...you do not need to pry his mouth open for this). Do not threaten your dog with the bottle or the Binaca. Once you pull it out, use it or it will soon become ineffective. Once you have used your tools, put them away on the counter or hide it behind you. Don't keep them out in front of you like a threat.

3. QUIETLY PRAISE YOUR DOG IN A HAPPY, HIGH VOICE as the dog is shaking himself off or trying to spit the Binaca out, "Gooooood dog, Gooooood quiet!!" You may have to repeat steps one through three several times within the course of about five minutes before you get any results at first...that is normal, just be persistent about it.

4. HANDS OFF YOUR DOG WHEN HE IS BEING VOCAL. Any touching or soothing behavior you may try to do to your dog at this point will only reinforce the barking! Only touch or pet your dog when he is being still AND quiet.

5. REWARD THE SILENCE!! This is the most important part of teaching your dog to be quiet. Each time your dog is quiet when normally he would bark, make sure you praise him vocally, with a pat or scratch, and/or with a treat. This is so he learns you like it a lot when there is silence around your house.

If you have any problems, questions or concerns please call the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley's Animal Behavior Helpline at 408/727-3383, extension 753.