



How to Manage Barking

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons:

Watch Dog Barking: Serves the dual purpose of alerting pack members that there is an intruder and warning the intruder that they have been noticed.

Request Barking: Is the dog's way of communicating to the owner that he would like something NOW typical requests are "open the door NOW," "pay attention to me NOW," "let me out of here NOW," "I wanna see that dog NOW" etc.

Request Barking: This is a common form of request barking: the dog is requesting that you come back. There is also often some anxiety involved.

Watchdog Barking

To help combat this barking, teach your dog the meaning of the words "bark" and "quiet" (or any word you want to use as an "off" switch). First, you have to teach the dog to bark and quiet on command as a trick. To elicit the barking so that you can practice, you must use something you know makes the dog bark, like the doorbell or a weird noise outside (you may need a helper). Arrange the following sequence:

- 1) your command "bark!"
- 2) the doorbell or other prompt
- 3) barking from the dog
- 4) praise from you: "good bark!"
- 5) your command "quiet"
- 6) showing him the treat
- 7) his (eventual) distraction from barking by the treat
- 8) 3-5 seconds of quiet during which you praise "gooo-ood quiet"



9) giving him the treat after 3-5 seconds of perfect quiet

10) repeat, gradually lengthening the duration of the “quiet” up to a minute

Do it over and over until the dog knows the game. He knows the game when he barks on the command and doesn't need the doorbell anymore, and he quiets on the first quiet command without having to be shown the treat (you still give him one from your pocket, you just don't show it anymore). If ever he interrupts a quiet with even one bark, say “oh! too bad” and start counting the quiet time from the beginning again. Barking during the quiet time will cost him his treat.

When you can turn barking on and off anytime, anyplace as a trick, you may now start commanding quiet after a few barks when your dog barks on his own in real-life situations.

Request Barking

When they want something, dogs will experiment with various behaviors to see if any of them work. They quickly figure out that barking works with their owners. If you don't like barking, stop rewarding it with attention, door-opening services, releasing from crates etc. Period. No buts.

Rather than the dog telling you when to take him out, take him out at regular intervals, making sure none of them are preceded by barking. Don't let a barking dog out of a crate until he's quiet. Ignore dogs who bark at you. Keep in mind that if you have been rewarding it for a while, the barking will get worse before it goes into extinction. You're changing the rules and the dog will be frustrated at first. Whatever you do, don't crack and reward the WORSE version of the barking!

Above all, start noticing the dog when he's quiet. Teach him that there are payoffs for lying quietly, chewing on a chew-toy and refraining from barking.



Barking When Alone

When you get a new dog or puppy, set a good precedent right away. Don't smother him with your constant presence and attention. Come and go a lot and never go to him when he's vocalizing. Wait until he's quiet for at least 30 seconds so you don't risk rewarding the noise making. If your dog already has a habit, you must start a multi-pronged assault:

- 1) When you're at home, don't let him shadow you around: lock him in various rooms away from you to practice "semi-absences" and ignore any barking.
- 2) Practice loads of brief absences every day. Go out and come back in after 2 or 3 seconds over and over to get the dog desensitized to your departures. Do it in a matter of fact way, more or less ignoring the dog whatever he does. Then do outings of 10 seconds, 30, a minute, 10 minutes etc. Mix it up. Dogs who are anxious need to learn that your departure doesn't usually mean a traumatically long period of isolation. Keep all your departures and arrival greetings low key. Never enter when the dog is barking. Wait for a lull of at least 30 seconds.
- 3) Dogs are a highly social species. They don't cope well with prolonged isolation. Consider a second dog, daycare or dog-walker at lunchtime if you work all day.
- 4) Increase physical and mental stimulation. In a natural environment, a lot of your dog's energy would be spent acquiring his food!
- 5) Tire him out more before long absences. Walks aren't always enough to exert a high energy dog, so try out high-intensity games like ball-fetch, Frisbee, tug-of-war, hide & seek, free-play with other dogs.

If your dog is anxious to the point of panic attacks, he has separation anxiety and may need formal desensitization and/or medication. If this is the case, talk to your veterinarian or a certified dog trainer.



For AAWL adopters who need more information or if you have additional questions, reach out to our support team at 602-273-6852 ext. 105.