

BARKING

Each and every time your dog barks, get up, go out, and see why the dog is barking.

If your dog is barking for a good reason (such as a stranger in the yard), you should praise your dog and then tell it to be quiet. If the stranger is coming to see you I would give the visitor a treat to give your dog this will prevent your dog from becoming overly protective. If the dog is barking because there is a squirrel up the tree, or something similar, tell the dog to be quiet and immediately go back into the house. Bring the dog with you and make him lie down next to you for 5 minutes. You will have to repeat this every time the dog barks. Pretty soon, in a week or so depending on the dog, the dog will only bark for a good reason.

You must reinforce not barking. If you have seen the dog choose not to bark, go play with him. Jack pot quiet behavior with something he likes. The dog may still bark at the squirrel, but not continually. Instead, one or two good barks to scare the squirrel, and then it considers its duty done. At the same time, you have not dampened your dog's ability to bark when there is something wrong. Take a neighbor's complaint seriously, even if it is unwarranted. More neighbor disputes arise over barking dogs than anything else. Dogs have been injured or killed by neighbors desperate for a good night's sleep. There is some evidence that barking is an inherited trait: if the parents bark a lot, chances are their puppies will too. Also, certain breeds love to bark!

One method that helps alleviate barking is to give your dog permission to bark.

Teach him to "speak" -- let him "speak" when appropriate (say, when you're playing in the park). Then "quiet". You can put a bit of peanut butter into the dog's mouth and he will have to stop barking to lick the peanut butter off the roof of his mouth. However, the most difficult barking problem to solve is when the dog is alone. The following methods outline some other possibilities to address this:

Collars

There are electronic anti-bark collars available that respond to sound or vibration caused by your dog's bark. Something unwanted by the dog happens when he barks. Dogs will react differently, depending on how they learn, are trained, and handled. The collars by themselves are not the solution to your dog's barking, but can be very useful when combined with other management techniques. Ideally, the dog should not understand that the collar giving the correction so that you can ultimately wean the dog off the collar. Read the instructions on the devices; the good ones will outline exactly how to train them.

There are two types electronic bark collars. one will eliminate the barking -- that is, they are triggered by any barking the dog does. Others are "diminishers", they will kick in after one or two barks. There are a few that adjust to be one or the other. With diminisher collars, watch out for the dog learning to "pattern bark" -- they'll learn they can bark twice, pause, bark twice, etc. You will need to switch to an eliminator in this case. The best collars are triggered by throat vibration rather than noise, this avoids

having your dog corrected when a nearby car backfires!

Citronella collar

Then there is the Citronella collar (the most humane - but it is noise activated). This collar releases a spray of citronella when bark activated. Here's how it work's:

Each time your dog barks, the electronic bark-sensing unit, releases a brisk, citronella spray in front of the dog's snout. Your dog hears it, sees it and most importantly, smells it. At the first spray of citronella, your dog's natural curiosity will be to seek the origin of the new odor. The dog will very quickly learn that when he or she barks, It Sprays! Through this harmless conditioned reflex, this discourages your dog from barking. It is the only humane solution to the problem of nuisance barking. It is a harmless distraction to your dog's senses. Should you want to reverse the effects of this collar, just stop using the device. The citronella spray is 100% safe for all dogs, people and the environment. It can be used safely on all healthy dogs. Research shows that this collar will eliminate nuisance-barking by up to 88%, and dogs will only bark in extreme situations such as emergencies.

Debarking

Surgery on the dog's vocal cords, called debarking, can be done to reduce the barking to a whispery sound. This is a controversial practice, banned in Britain and other places. Some vets will refuse to do the surgery. The dogs do not stop barking. They do not seem to notice the difference, or at any rate continue "barking" as if they still made the noise. There are different ways to perform the surgery, and it is possible for the vocal cords to grow back and the dog to regain its bark. If the vocal cords are cut, chances are the cords will heal themselves. If they are cauterized, the operation will last longer. Whether it is over a period of weeks or months, it seems that many dogs eventually regain use of their vocal cords.

Muzzles There is a "No-Bark Muzzle" that is designed to prevent dogs from barking. Many dogs very rapidly learn not to bark when the muzzle is put on them whenever they start barking. It is not binding or confining and does not put the dog through surgery. In general, dogs should not be left alone with muzzles on unless it allows them to drink. A cloth muzzle is best - big enough that he can drink some water. A gentle leader could be used in a pinch. Remember you must reinforce for no barking for any chance of the new muzzle induced behavior to hold.

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