



Welcome to Day Three of the SitStayFetch 6 Day Course

Dealing with Barking (or, Why Your Dog Doesn't Really Want to Bark All the Time)

In terms of evolution, you can say that dogs bark because we want them to. When we began domesticating dogs somewhere between 15,000 and 150,000 years ago, we saw the potential advantage of a very loyal and very vocal companion, so we selectively bred barking into domestic dogs from wild wolves, which don't bark. We also selected for all the sorts of traits we thought were cute, such as big eyes and flat faces. I'm not sure who was on the job when they decided "loud" should be in this category, but that's what happened. Vocal dogs were prized and thus their genes were privileged.



Consequently, certain breeds of dogs, such as those traditionally selected as watch dogs, are known to be heavy barkers. You should always consider the breed proactively when getting a new dog to possibly avoid barking related problems.

In any case, even when your dog seems to be barking at nothing, you can bet they're barking for something, even if they're only barking for your return. (Continual barking that kicks in after you are gone for 20 minutes or so and continues incessantly could be an indication of separation anxiety, a psychological condition that will require some extra attention and training).

Rule out the obvious first: if they start to bark toward the end of the day, they could be hungry. If they bark after being left contained for a few hours, they could need exercise (or perhaps a bathroom break). As many dog behaviorists stress, dogs are social, pack-oriented animals, and since you (and family) now comprise the dog's pack, you can expect your dog to make some noise if they are left alone for long periods of time.

Once you have ruled out the obvious, and given your friend enough exercise and attention, you can start to zero in on training a dog that is still barking. You should try to identify causes. Barking will be caused by either an external or internal stimulus. An "attention-getting" bark arises from an internal distress. A bark meant to sound an alert arises from a passing person, or dog, or insect as the case may be.

You can address internal stimulus through training, such as either ignoring an attention-getting bark until your dog settles, then rewarding his ability to quiet down, or holding your dog's snout firmly and asking it, gently, to "Shhh." Again, reward the right response.

In addition, you can often eliminate external stimulus through common sense. For example, I dealt with a dog that moved with its owner from a house with a door knocker to one with a doorbell. The dog was well-behaved and generally quiet. But the doorbell drove it into a barking frenzy. I suggested he remove the doorbell and ask visitors to "Please knock" by way of a small sign where the doorbell used to be. Problem solved.

If your dog barks "at you" immediately after you've given them a command, then you have some dominance training to do. They are talking back.

Nuisance Barking When You are There

When you need to curb your dog's barking, it can be a real challenge if the only time they do it is when you're not there. Often, these dogs need a training program that will not only address the barking, but possibly a general case of separation anxiety. However, you're in luck if they bark in your presence, as you can correct the barking with the right timing, correction, and praise. Dealing with a barking problem when you're there may also help prevent it from happening when you're away. There are several methods discussed, which each have varying degrees of merit:

Ignore, wait, and reward method. This is good for attention seekers, but you'll need some patience, and perhaps a good set of earplugs. The important thing is to reward them immediately after they stop.

The squirt gun method. I personally don't enjoy carrying around a gun (how un-American of me!) even if that gun is filled with water. It can be a hassle, and if you're not a quick enough draw, it diminishes the effect. Note: a mixture of Citronella or water and vinegar solution (one part vinegar to eight parts water) can be more effective than straight water when using this approach. Aim for the chest, not the face.

The collar and leash method. Effective for dogs on lead that have been trained to respond to a tug and a corrective, "Uh uh" or simple "No." You may find it easy to suppress barking through the same means. This is a good method.

But here's the absolute best and quickest:

Physical correction method. No, it is NOT the least bit violent, painful, or inhumane. When your dog barks, meet them at their level, firmly wrap one or both of your hands around the snout (don't shake it), and repeat your corrective command. I use a continual "Shhh" or a repeated "Uh uh uh uh." The idea is to hold on not only until they stop making noise (they obviously can't bark with their mouth closed) but also until they stop resisting the placement of your hand by jerking back or wriggling away. This method is effective also because it asserts your dominant role in the process.

Because it involves a physical correction, it may not be a favorite option for owners uncomfortable with this sort of interaction. But I can only emphasize that dogs are not children and they feel more secure with a clear idea of a pack leader they can trust.

Whatever method you choose, only repetition will do the trick. Never yell. It's like barking back at them. It just makes more noise. Though it's easy to tell your dog to shut it through an open window, it's lazy, and if your dog is barking because it needs to tell you something, even if it's just that they want a bit more attention, then yelling will upset and confuse them more. Expect more barking. As always, give praise when the barking stops.

All in all, you still need to allow your dog times to fully express themselves and their beautiful voice. It is not realistic that you always ask your dog to stop barking every time they start. In fact, this can have dangerous consequences if the dog needs to alert you to something but they have been discouraged from speaking up. Remember, if they are barking to indicate the arrival of someone trying to sell their Tupperware or their religion, let them go for an extra minute, and thank them after your visitor has made a hasty exit.

Nuisance Barking When You're Away

Ok, now it's time to talk about that difficult situation of a dog that only barks when you're away. Obviously, most problems with barking dogs result from dogs that don't have their owner around to quiet them down. In fact, the owner's absence in many cases is what's rousing the dog's vocal chords.

A lonely dog barking or whining can be a nuisance and difficult to address, but there are still some things you should be doing. Try to come home more often, or try to arrange for a friend to visit, ideally with their friendly and energetic dog. It may nip the problem right in the bud. Enough said.

If you know you've got a barking dog problem that has the potential to anger neighbors, a little public relations work can go a long way. If possible, ask your neighbors if there is a barking nuisance coming from your place and, if there is, tell them you're working on it. Then work on it.

You might also try staging a false exit. Walk once around the house or whatever it takes for your dog to think you're gone. When your dog barks, correct the behavior with a "Quiet" command (though your sudden reappearance will likely be enough to stop them anyway).

You can use special bark collars, that either use sonic or electric power to correct your dog. Other collars squirt a substance such as citronella when they bark, a scent they despise. I don't use them, and the ones I have seen in use were awkward and not 100 percent effective. But I stay away from them less because they train through discomfort (they do not harm your pet), and more because they displace the source of authority from you to some device that they don't really understand. Furthermore, they don't differentiate between acceptable - even necessary - barking on one hand, and noise pollution on the other. And that's not good. There's also a medieval-like procedure whereby the dog's voice-box is removed to render them barkless, or at least takes the bite out of their bark. This is abhorrent.

A better option for desperate dog owners is arranging some form of doggy day care, whether it's a professional service or a personal arrangement. Some dogs simply do not get enough stimulation during the day, and they will let the world know about it until they do.

And that brings us to the conclusion of part 3 of your SitStayFetch 6 Day Course. I know I threw a lot your way, but hopefully the result, for you and your dog, is perfect silence.

Until then,



Daniel Stevens
SitStayFetch

http://www.kingdomofpets.com/dogobediencetraining/6day_special.php

P.S. Did you know that we've got a Special Offer for Subscribers to the SitStayFetch 6 Day Course? (That's you). Check it out at:

http://www.kingdomofpets.com/dogobediencetraining/6day_special.php

P.P.S. Here's what some of our customers have said about SitStayFetch...

Success Story: Sandra Martinez

So far, quickly getting their attention onto something else at the start of barking seems to help tremendously.

"Daniel, Here is a picture of my 2 "babies", JohnnyD and Benito. They are 1 1/2 years old and 9 months old, who very much need attitude adjustments. I ordered your sitstayfetch ebook because they have barking problems as well as growling/nipping from JohnnyD (the oldest).



I have only read a little bit of your book mostly in the areas needed. I am implementing your techniques and testimonies from others, with slow progress so far. I will keep up the training. So far, quickly getting their attention onto something else at the start of barking seems to help tremendously. I look forward to learning more as the days go by, and having 2 well behaved chihuahua's. Thank you for all your expertise help. Thank You."

-- Sandra Martinez (USA)

P.P.P.S. About SitStayFetch...

With over 25,743 customers (and counting), SitStayFetch: Dog Training to Stop Your Dog's Behavior Problems is the premier product of Kingdom of Pets. This comprehensive guide is written by renowned dog trainer Daniel Stevens, who currently heads the Kingdom of Pets dog training and obedience team.

Libros Media & Kingdom of Pets (USA)
8721 Santa Monica Blvd #1229
Los Angeles
CA 90069-4057, USA

Libros Media & Kingdom of Pets (Asia-Pacific)
P.O.Box 2831
Level 2-107 Cashel St
Christchurch 8011, New Zealand

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