

How to Stop a Dog From Barking

cherilyn | January 05, 2016

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Barking is a completely natural behavior for dogs, but we humans don't always appreciate it. In your dog's mind, however, there's a good reason to bark, so the first thing to do is figure out why she wants to bark in what you consider the most inappropriate times.

If you aren't home while the barking is going on, you may need to stage a scenario over the weekend to figure it out. Pretend that you are leaving and then come back to spy on the dog.

Does she bark at every movement she sees through the window and every sound she hears? An easy fix for this is to simply block the view. Close the shades. Confine her to a part of the house that doesn't have windows she can see through or if she stays outside in a fenced-in yard, keep her indoors rather than leaving her outside all day. She won't bark at what she does not see. Play some music or the television, loud enough to cover outside noises.

If the dog seems to be barking at nothing, he's likely bored. Boredom, due to lack of exercise and mental stimulation, is probably the biggest reason for excessive barking. Think honestly about whether your dog is getting enough. How would you feel if you were locked up at home all day with no cell phone, tablet, computer or even television? Not even a book to read. You'd get bored pretty fast.



A young, energetic dog craves lots of exercise and attention from you. Thirty minutes to an hour of vigorous exercise in the morning will go a long way toward helping your dog settle down. For the first few weeks, you may need to have someone come over at lunch to exercise him again.

Food puzzle toys and hollow rubber toys that can be stuffed with treats are great entertainment for dogs. They give your dog something fun to do while you are gone. Keep a couple on hand so you can leave one for him every day. It's okay if he gets most of his meals this way. He's working for his food!

Does your dog bark for attention? Don't give him any! None at all – even stern reprimands count as attention. He has no idea what “quiet” means; yelling “quiet!” will only make it worse. He'll think you're joining in the barking game. Reward him with your attention when he's calm and not barking. Teach a cue for being quiet. It's a good trick to have in your dog's bag for when he's out with you and barking isn't welcome.

Here's How to Teach Your Dog a Cue To Stop Barking:

Have some high-value treats ready – small and soft so they can be eaten quickly. While the dog is barking, just wait for her to stop. When she does stop, wait a beat, praise, and give her a treat. Gradually increase the time she must be quiet before rewarding her. If she starts barking, take a few steps backward and make the duration less. Once she seems to be understanding, add a word – *hush*, *quiet*, whatever works for you. Be consistent.

It is unreasonable to expect your dog to never bark as barking is the way they communicate with the world, but you can teach her some control.

Help! My Puppy Won't Stop Nipping

Stephen Smith | May 28, 2015

It was a typical question sent to an AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy instructor. “I need help, I just adopted a terrier puppy and he bites when he is playing. His teeth are like needles. How can I teach him not to bite?” It’s hard to believe how much those needle-like tiny teeth can hurt when a rambunctious puppy nips your hands while playing. One of the most important lessons a puppy learns while in the litter is bite inhibition. Bite inhibition is when a dog learns to control the intensity of a bite. In the litter, the dam (mother) teaches bite inhibition. If puppies bite while nursing, the dam will nip them or stand up and walk away, taking the breakfast buffet with her.

The dam isn’t the only one who teaches a puppy not to bite. When puppies are playing with their siblings, if a puppy gets wound up and bites too hard, the sibling will jump up and yelp. She may leave the game as if to say, “Don’t do that! That hurts!” The puppy soon learns if he wants the fun game to continue, he cannot bite too hard.

When your puppy bites, loudly say, “OUCH!” This lets him know that biting is not okay. Don’t jerk your hand away if he has his teeth on you because this could tear your skin. The idea is that you are going to retreat from the game if he bites. Behaviorally, this is a time-out from the reinforcing activity that is time and attention from you.

During your play sessions, work on teaching your pup to respond to the word, “Easy...” as you say it quietly and gently. You can give him some food rewards for gentle play. Keep in mind that while nipping a person is not acceptable, all puppies need to chew as a part of the teething process. Make sure your puppy has access to safe chew toys.

At this stage in your puppy’s development, an AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy class is a great idea. You’ll be able to get tips from the instructor and get your puppy on the road to being well socialized.

Five Quick Tips for Leash Training Your Puppy or Dog

Staff Writers | August 11, 2015

1. Be a tree. If your dog pulls on the leash, stop walking! Only continue walking once your dog has put slack in the leash. Consider a head halter or front-hook harness if your dog tends to pull.

2. Don't allow your dog to approach another dog without permission from the owner. Just because your dog is friendly, doesn't mean every dog is! If the other owner declines, don't get offended or try to force the other dog into a greeting. Remember, that the other dog may be recovering from surgery or an illness; he could be in training; or he may just have had a bad experience in the past.

3. Pick up after your dog. Not only is it unsightly and unpleasant to step in, dog waste is a source of pollution for surface water supplies, harboring pathogens like E. coli and giardia. So always pack some dog waste bags when you take a walk!

4. Barking at other dogs. Leash reactivity is a common problem among dogs that don't get enough mental stimulation or exercise. Try trick training and treat-dispensing toys along with longer and more frequent exercise sessions. Fetch, swimming, and running at the park are all great ways to supplement a daily walk.

5. Lunging and barking at passing cars, bikes, and skateboarders. This is often seen in herding breeds. The motion of the wheels can trigger a predator/prey response in your dog and incite him to chase. You can help this problem by redirecting your dog as soon as he notices a moving object. Create distance by moving away from the object. Redirect your dog with tasty treats and easy "tricks" like sit, down, shake, and following you as you walk backward.
