

Tips and Techniques

BARKING

Barking is normal for dogs to do. Excessive barking is not. Dogs bark to warn or signal that something needs to be paid attention to, a warning or because they are happy. It is their way of communicating. If a dog is happy, exercised and mentally stimulated, barking is used only for necessary purposes. When dogs are bored they bark or howl because it's something to do and gives them comfort. They don't care that it's driving neighbors crazy or setting off the neighbor dogs, they are just bored and under stimulated.

Think of ways your dog would be entertained. Such as dogs with the tendency to use their noses, would love to find things. A fun game is called "Find It" and can be played with children.

The Find It Game:

- Use really yummy treats that aren't usually used when training. Keep the dog inside the house as you place small pieces of a treat around the yard. Such as by a planter, on the lawn furniture, swing set or raised bed. Keep it safe for the dog. When starting to play this game, make it easy to find the treats and gradually move to harder spots based on the age and level of the dog.
- Once the treats have been scattered around the yard, bring the dog outside and say "Find it". Take the dog to the first spot where the treat is, point to it and say "Find It", as the dog takes the treat, click. Repeat this for every treat.
- When the game is over and all the treats have been found, praise, be happy and excited. Make this game fun for the dog.
- Do this game about 3-5 times and soon the dog can be told to "Find it" without showing where the treat is and he/she will go and find it.

Level 2: Flip a box or hard plastic bucket over and hide the treat inside, the dog will have to flip over the box or bucket to find the treat.

The purpose of this game is to eventually be able to put out fun treats, part of their dinner, etc. and ask them to find it when you have to leave them for a short period of time. It will keep them occupied and mentally challenged while you are away and help to eliminate the barking and boredom.



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Tips to teach a dog to stop barking

You must catch the movement of barking before the barking begins. That sounds difficult but during training, you should make yourself available and the dog will respond in a lot less time. Be consistent. If your dog barks for attention or at another dog, DO NOT pet your dog and say, "Rover, stop" or "Rover, it's ok". Many owners don't realize this is actually REWARDING the behavior you don't want. Give your dog praise when it's NOT barking, say "Good Quiet" and praise your dog.

Before the bark occurs, your dog's body language will tell you. Ears and nose goes up sniffing the air and they will begin to make a movement, quickly and in an assertive manner, say "Sssh". When they look at you, click then treat as long as if they are not barking. Do not reward them if they continue to bark. Repeat this every time they are about to bark. It is important to have your dog on a leash during this exercise.

If they have run from you and are barking (such as at the neighbor dog on the other side of the fence), step in front of the dog and say "Sssh". Continue to step forward in front of the dog, making him/her move away or back from the area they are barking at. Put them in a sit and get them refocused on to you. Say "Good Quiet" and reward with a treat when they are not barking. Continue this exercise even if they go back to the spot they were barking at. This behavior will slowly diminish over time, be patient and reward when they are NOT barking.

The purpose for this technique is to show the dog that barking is not necessary and when it doesn't bark it receives the reward. By using "Sssh" and stepping into their zone, you are providing the authority and reassurance you are in charge and barking is not what you want at that moment. Barking is natural for a dog and a way for them to communicate, however, you can teach them when it's OK to bark. You can teach your dog "Speak" on command. Which means the dog only barks when you ask it to.



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