

BARKING



Fun Dawgs

*Human & Dog
Friendly Training &
Behavior Modification*

**WANT YOUR DOG TO KNOW HOW?
CALL TONI BOW WOW!**

BARKING

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons:

- f **Watchdog Barking** serves the dual purpose of alerting pack members that there is an intruder and warning the intruder that they have been noticed.
- f **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.
- f **Spooky Barking** occurs when the dog is uncomfortable about something in the environment and barks to say "I'm dangerous! Don't come any closer!"
- f **Boredom Barking** can result when the dog's daily needs for exercise and social stimulation are not met. The dog has gone essentially mad from boredom.

Watchdog Barking

The standby technique is to teach the dog a competing response – such as fetching a certain toy or doing a down-stay on a mat (which stops barking in many dogs) for tasty food rewards. Practice out of doorbell or "intruder" contexts first and then incorporate the game or command into real-life situations. The dog will need some coaching and prompting the first few times in the real-life situation so prepare to budget some time for that. Even better, set it up with a cohort to play "visitor," so you can focus on the dog rather than being forced to attend to the person at the door. When the dog is more advanced, you can also incorporate penalties. If he gets it right, he is rewarded as usual. If he barks, he goes into the penalty box – a back room or crate that is far from the action.

Another technique – high effort but great result – is to teach the 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.

You must be able to yo-yo the dog back and forth reliably between bark and quiet before you try out your "quiet" command in real situations. The most common mistake is trying to use the quiet command before it's well-enough conditioned in training sessions. Think of quiet on command as a muscle you're making stronger.

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. The first few times the dog will respond poorly to the command. Don't give up. Have really good treats handy. Go back to showing him the treat up front the first few times. Practice makes perfect.

If your dog “goes off” for the smallest sounds and changes in the environment, it would help the cause to get him better habituated. Take him out more, invite people and dogs over to socialize, expose him to a wider range of sights and sounds.

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 guardians. Your dog may bark, whine, whimper or yelp in order to get attention or something else she wants from people or other animals. Dogs often bark to get attention when their guardians are otherwise occupied, such as talking on the phone. Your dog may whine or bark at the back door because doing so usually causes you to let her out or in. If your dog is barking to get attention, her body postures may vary but are usually friendly. You may also see your dog jumping up, or pawing or nudging you and other people as part of the attention-seeking sequence. If you don't like barking, stop rewarding it with attention, door-opening services, releasing from crates etc. Period. No buts.

Even "negative attention" such as yelling at your dog, may be reinforcing, causing the behavior to continue. This usually happens if your dog isn't receiving what she considers enough attention from you and other people, or if she hasn't been taught other, more appropriate behaviors to get your attention.

WHAT TO DO:

Teach your dog to sit quietly to get your attention instead of barking.

You can teach your dog to paw at a bell hung on the door when she wants to be let in or out, as a replacement for barking, or take her out at regular intervals, making sure none of them are preceded by barking.

Temporarily avoid situations, places or things that trigger the barking. For example, you might let your dog inside before she starts barking at the door.

Remove the reward for the behavior. If your dog barks at you so you'll play with her, get up and walk away or leave the room instead. If your dog brings you a toy and waits quietly, play with her.

Don't let a barking dog out of a crate until she's quiet.

Ignore your dog until she stops barking. Expect her to bark louder and longer at first before she learns this won't work to get what she wants anymore, especially if you have been rewarding it for a while. 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 she's quiet.



Teach her that there are payoffs for lying quietly, chewing on a chew-toy, and refraining from barking. Rewards for quiet can be attention, such as praise, petting, cuddling, or tasty treats.

Barking When Alone

This is a common form of request barking: the dog is requesting that you come back. There is also often some anxiety involved. 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." Ignore any barking. Ignoring is a powerful tool. Remember that he's barking to get you back: with some dogs, a reprimand is better than nothing.

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. He would have to find prey, run it down, hang onto and kill it and then rip it apart to eat it. He'd have to attempt several finds and run-downs before he successfully made a kill. That's work!

Make him work to acquire his food. Hide it around the house, scatter it in the grass in the backyard, make him extract it from the hollow inside of a bone or Kong toy (which you also hide), make him earn it piece by piece for obedience exercises or tricks, make him solve problems. Your imagination is the limit. Make your absences predict that his meal is hidden around the house so that



he has to get busy when you leave if he wants to eat. Dogs are programmed to work for their food. It's no wonder there are so many problems related to understimulation.

Tire him out more before long absences. Walks don't cut it as exercise for dogs. Most dogs like getting out and checking out the environment but it's not exercise. Exercise means exertion. Start working your dog out with high-intensity games like ball-fetch, Frisbee, tug-of-war, hide & seek, free-play with other dogs etc.

5) Get him more focused on toys. When you play with him, incorporate toys. Hold chewies for him. Teach him to find a toy that you've hidden in the room and then celebrate his find with tug of war or fetch. Teach him his toys by name. Ask him to bring you one when you come home. Don't greet him until he's brought it. Then have a vigorous game of fetch. Leave him stuffed chew toys during absences: fill hollow bones or Kongs with cheese, peanut butter, cookies or combos.

Spooky Barking

In this case, it is important to get at the underlying undersocialization. Socialize puppies extensively to as wide a variety of people and dogs as possible. You cannot overdo it. Expose them to plenty of places, experiences, sights & sounds and make it all fun with praise, games and treats. Find and attend a good puppy class.

If you missed the boat socializing your puppy, you'll have to do remedial work with your adolescent or adult. Whatever it is that your dog is spooky about must now become associated with lunch. This is how under socialized dogs work for their food. If he doesn't like strangers, meals need to be fed bit by bit around strangers until he improves. It takes a while to resocialize adults so stick with it.

Boredom Barking

Dogs are not space-intensive, they are time-intensive. If you have an outside dog, train him to be an inside dog. There is no quick fix here: you must meet your dog's basic needs for stimulation, exercise and companionship.

Questions?

*Not sure what's right
for you and your dog?*

Contact me!

I'm always happy to talk dog!

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