

Hush, Puppy!

Putting the Bite

on Unwanted



Barking

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Introduction

“Yap! Yip yip! Yip yip yip!” Pull the pillow around your ears and try to think of something else. “Yip Yip Yip Yip!” Anything, think of anything but the little, wing-eared, fringe-haired Papillon who lives upstairs. A rescued animal, he hates to be left alone. And when he is left alone, he barks, high in register as befits one with such a short throat, approximately once every second until his people return.

They’ve been gone for three hours. And it’s 11:30 on a weeknight.

Perhaps you are the baggy-eyed neighbor of an incessantly barking dog. Or maybe you are a new owner, who through your own goodness of heart has been saddled with someone else’s rejected, untrained pet.

If you’re reading this, chances are you’re looking for answers to the problem of the barking dog. You will find solutions, which have been listed in order of increasing complexity (or severity) in this book. Rather than telling you to buy some trendy prop, this book covers the psychology of working with a barking dog. You’ll learn how and why barking differs from breed to breed, and the best breed of dog for your lifestyle. You’ll learn something about dog culture and how it differs from human culture. You’ll cover the rationale behind being the “top dog”, and learn ways to communicate effectively with your dog. You’ll learn the reasons dogs bark in the first place, and methods for stopping your dog’s barking that range from simple distraction to drastic intervention. The decision tree in the last chapter can help you rule out and pinpoint possible causes of unhealthy barking, and contains a review of remedies for each cause. (If your landlord just nailed an eviction notice to the door, you may decide to read the last chapter first). At the end of this book, you will find a list of websites that sell dog-related products.

Your relationship with your dog is an important part of your life, and maybe the most important part of his (or hers). This book was created to help people increase the quality of their relationship with their dogs, and to ensure their dogs’ welcome in the greater human community. In case you are a part of the community who’s having a problem welcoming the constant voice of your neighbor’s dog, we also include a section on your options (see Section 18).

Why Dogs Bark

Dogs bark for several reasons: they may be lonely or afraid; they may be aggressive and asserting their dominance; they may be bored, hungry, or too cold or hot. They may be excited; they may want attention. When you're trying to figure out how to stop a dog from barking, the reason behind the behavior determines the type of method you use to achieve your goal – a relatively bark-free life.

Don't expect your dog to stop barking completely: dogs bark the way we talk – to communicate, to express themselves. Barking is an evolutionarily valuable response to territorial threats, and as such, your dog's barking may serve to deter potential threats to your security. Barking scares away other animals and lets scary people know that someone with teeth has noticed their presence. A well-timed bark can be very useful.

"If I have any beliefs about immortality, it is that certain dogs I have known will go to heaven, and very, very few persons."

- James Thurber

But if your dog doesn't know when to stop, it's a problem for you and for your neighbors. Most towns have ordinances against excessive barking, deeming it a noise nuisance. Different towns and cities have different specific remedies, and they all suggest contacting the owner before filing a formal complaint. As a dog owner, it is to your benefit to listen when neighbors contact you about your dog's excessive barking. It's much better to prevent the situation from escalating than to face repeated complaints, Animal Control or police investigations, or even fines and jail time. In general, people are encouraged to report nuisance barking to Animal Control, Public Health or the Police Department, by telephone, letter and by completing a form. In some cases, complaints are investigated the first time; oftentimes it takes three or more complaints before they send an officer around. Continued offenses are considered misdemeanors and may be prosecuted by the local District Attorney. In Foster City, California for example, offenders may face a fine of \$1,000 or a year in jail. Aside from legal remedies, hostile neighbors may take the situation into their own hands, poisoning or shooting noisy dogs.

It's frustrating to be responsible for someone who doesn't even speak your language, but since you are the human, you have to go the extra mile in

helping your dog to stop barking. The first step in quieting your dog is discovering what is making him bark. Once you have an idea of what your dog is barking at (or barking for), you have a much better chance of teaching him to stop.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Barking is normal canine behavior.
2. Dogs bark when they're lonely, anxious, bored or frightened.
3. Dogs bark to protect their territory.
4. Excessive barking can cause dog-owners legal and social problems.
5. You can teach your dog to stop barking!

"Why Are You Barking?"

Your Dog's Personal Reasons for Making All That Noise

There are some basic possibilities to check out before you decide that your dog is insane or trying to gaslight you. Dogs bark for various reasons; you may be able to solve the barking problem by simple changing some very basic thing in your dog's life.

First, check out the externals. Is your dog an inside or outside dog? Some dogs don't do well outside because dogs are pack animals and like to be around others in the family. When you lock them outside they feel ostracized. You can try bringing the dog inside, or getting him some company in the form of another dog, or even possibly a cat. You can open your curtains so he can see you working at your desk, or close the curtains so he forgets you're there, depending on what you think is making him bark, and what you've already tried and ruled out.

"Bulldogs are adorable, with faces like toads that have been sat on."

Colette

If he's an outside dog, does he have a doghouse or a comfortable bed to lie in? Is he chained or roped, and if so, is the rope long enough for him to roam around the yard? Does he have a ready supply of water, and is he fed at regular times? Is it warm enough or cool enough for him? Like people, dogs feel unhappy and uncomfortable when their basic survival needs aren't being adequately met. First, make sure that your dog is physically comfortable and healthy; then start asking questions about his mental state.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Outside dogs may be feeling left out of family ("pack") life.
2. Physical discomfort can cause a dog to bark.
3. Check out your dog's physical conditions to discover what may be making him bark.

Your Dog's Health

Health is also a consideration in barking. Just as dogs bark when they are physically uncomfortable, they may also bark when they are sick, injured or aging. Your dog should visit the vet at least once a year, should be clean and groomed, current with vaccinations, and free of fleas, ticks and mites. Claws should be kept clipped to prevent tearing them, which may cause infection. Inspect your dog's ears, teeth and paw pads regularly, and be aware that changes in maturation (puppyhood-to-adolescence-to adulthood- to aging) may require adjustments in the type and quantity of food your dog eats. Like people, dogs may develop food or environmental allergies, which may require your vet's assistance to diagnose and treat.

*"The average dog is a nicer person
than the average person."*

Andrew A. Rooney

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Changes in maturation may result in changes in barking behavior.
2. Sickness may cause dogs discomfort, making them bark.
3. Allergies may impact your dog's health and happiness.
4. Take your dog to the vet every year.
5. Put your dog on a continuous parasite-prevention plan.
6. Keep dogs clean, with nails clipped.
7. Have your dog's teeth checked annually.
8. Inspect his paw pads for possible cuts or infection.

Older Dogs

Aging dogs, like some aging people, may suffer from arthritis pain, may feel achy and stiff in cold weather, or may just get less tolerant and more crotchety as the years pass. Feeling cranky may cause dogs to bark at things that didn't bother them much before – other animals, noisy cars or equipment, or children. Older dogs may develop problems with vision or hearing that cause them to become startled more easily (this is also one reason some older dogs start biting people they've always liked before. If your dog snaps at you and then acts immediately ashamed, you may have startled him).

If your older dog is suddenly barking a lot, start by checking out his physical surroundings and any obvious changes in his health. If you don't see anything different, haul him off to the vet for a check-up and talk to your vet about possible physiological changes that may be causing your dog's new behavior. As an older dog's hearing starts to go, he may bark at things that are not really there. In his mind it's better to be safe and bark than to be caught unaware and asleep on the job.

Sudden and/or prolonged barking may signify a change in your dog's mental state—old dogs sometimes suffer from confusion and even dementia just as people may—and there are drugs to help with these problems of aging.

"If a dog will not come to you after having looked you in the face, you should go home and examine your conscience."

Woodrow Wilson

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Older dogs have unique health issues (pain, confusion, crankiness) that may contribute to barking.
2. Have your dog's eyes and ears tested.
3. Arthritis may make a dog feel achy and stiff – especially in cold weather.
4. Notice whether he is sometimes startled.
5. Dogs may suffer from age-related dementia, or chronic joint pain, which might cause them to bark and bite.

Things Dogs Bark At

Let's cover circumstances known to cause barking. Dogs may bark when people are passing by or coming to the door, when loud equipment or specific automobiles drive by (I have a cat who is fascinated with garbage trucks. He runs to the window and watches with great interest every time one of these behemoths drives up the street). Dogs bark at things they see and/or hear that make them feel excited, territorial, frightened or angry. Sometimes all you have to do is prevent the dog from seeing whatever it is that sets him off. Close the curtains, build a fence or move the dog to another spot. For a dog who barks at what he cannot see, you may want to drill a couple of eye holes in the obstructing fence so he can keep an eye on what's going on. Take a moment to think about how you would feel in your dog's living situation, and then try making simple changes in his environment. Sometimes that's all you need!

*"To his dog, every man is King;
hence the constant popularity
of dogs."*

- Aldous Huxley

Finally, we get psychological. Is your dog bored, lonely, anxious or scared, too needy, high-strung, obsessive?

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Is your dog's environment making him bark?
2. Dogs may bark at things they see (people, cars, machines, other animals).
3. Dogs may bark at things they don't see!
4. Changing your dog's environment may end unwanted barking.
5. You can change your dog's environment!

Lonely Puppy (or Separation Anxiety)

Some new puppies, especially those who have been taken from their mothers quite early, bark when left alone. An old remedy for puppy loneliness is to put an old-fashioned, ticking clock in Puppy's bed. The rhythmic sound of the clock reminds Puppy of his mother's heartbeat, soothing and calming him. You can also try leaving the radio or television on for your lonely dog of any age, and in some cases, even a recording of your voice might be soothing. Leaving him with a soft shirt that you've worn but not washed may also provide him with your comforting scent.

"If I have any beliefs about immortality, it is that certain dogs I have known will go to heaven, and very, very few persons."

- James Thurber

If you don't find a way to handle puppy-barking, you'll one day have to deal with the barking of your lonely adult dog. One pet counselor described the dog who barks constantly until his people return as a dog who is calling his owners home. He knows that barking works, because they do come home, eventually! Dogs who spend a lot of time with their people may become dependent on the constant presence of others, so that when they are left alone, they feel anxious. And dogs express their anxiety by – you guessed it – barking.

One good way to prevent a lonely puppy growing into an anxious barker is to let him spend time alone while he's still a puppy. *(Be aware: some people unconsciously want their pets to need them, and this unconscious need to be depended on keeps them from training their pets to become healthily independent. If you find yourself thinking things like, "Oh fine, now that you have your new chew toy, you don't need me at all," watch out for ways you might sabotage your pet's learning. Don't feel bad about it: lots of people get pets precisely in order to feel needed, and your pet will still need you even after he's a perfectly-trained, well-behaved dog.)*

Teach your puppy that he can amuse himself when you aren't around. Provide him with toys that a dog can play with alone, chewing happily on something in his very own bed. If you give your dog a bed from the start and take him to it every night, you'll be doing both of you a favor. First, he will have his very own spot, where he can retreat to sleep, to daydream, or to hide

when he's in trouble. Second, you'll have your very own spot, which you won't have to share with a growling, shedding, drooling dog who expects to be with you every minute of your life. (Many vets recommend using a crate and training your dog to use that as his primary base, but if you're not planning to do a lot of traveling, and if your dog isn't unusually unruly, your dog can get by with a pet bed.)

When you're home, don't spend every waking and sleeping minute with your dog. Do your own thing sometimes and insist that he does his.

Start training your puppy right away. Puppies should start their training at two months of age, so don't wait too long to start teaching him that training is part of his daily life. While your puppy is young, you can try responding to barking not by shouting or petting or smacking him, but by turning your back on him and leaving the room. This works because the puppy's aim in barking is to get your attention, so by leaving the room, you are teaching him that you will not come if he calls you. Ignoring behavior extinguishes it. Be aware that you may have to "ignore" it for several weeks (and don't ever give in, because you will then have provided your dog with the unalterable proof that if he just barks long enough and loud enough, you'll pay attention to him.)

It's important not to comfort a dog who is barking. You don't want your dog to learn that to get your attention all he has to do is bark. Sometimes people feel guilty and try to make it up to the animal by talking, petting or even giving the animal treats. Occasionally giving in is called in psychological circles "intermittent reinforcement", and it's a powerful way to teach the exact opposite of the lesson you want your dog to learn. If you are inclined to feel guilty, remind yourself of the big picture – you're not being mean; you are teaching your dog healthy ways of being comfortable in the world.

If you try it for two solid weeks and ignoring the barking isn't working, you will want to move directly to Bark Prevention Training. (See section 13). Now this is going to sound like what I just told you not to do, because you will be learning to quieten the puppy when he barks. The difference here is, you will be building on the "speak and hush" training you've already shared, and you will practice it daily. Here's how:

Once you have practiced the basics of Bark Prevention Training and effectively taught your puppy to "speak" and to "hush", apply the training directly to the problem of loneliness. Pretend to leave the house (or the room, depending on what starts your puppy barking). When the barking starts, come back in and tell your puppy to "hush" just like you have in earlier training sessions. When he hushes and stays hushed, wait five or ten seconds, then tell him "good dog" and give him a treat. Then, leave the room again. Repeat this sequence until you can leave the room for five minutes

without hearing a bark. (You may also decide to put him in his bed or in his crate, not as a punishment, but because that is “his space” and will signal to him that it’s time to take a nap or chew a toy. If you decide to go this route, make sure and use his crate or bed consistently for hushing him when you go out.)

Continue training your dog to be quietly alone, gradually increasing the time you leave him to ten, then fifteen, then thirty minutes. If you’re actually leaving the house, the ideal situation is to have a voice-activated tape machine or a neighbor who will listen carefully and report back the amount of barking your dog produces while you’re gone. That will give you an idea of how your training is working, and whether there are any other factors at play. It’s possible that your puppy will learn to be quiet, but then a big truck rumbles by or a siren sounds, and frightens the dog or brings up a territorial reaction. If this happens, you’ll go ahead and train for lonely-puppy barking, then start desensitizing your puppy to the extra noises. Desensitizing, or targeted training is covered after Bark Prevention Training, later in this book.

Enlisting the help of a neighbor is also a good tactical idea if your neighbor has problems with your dog barking. It lets him know you’re serious about changing the behavior, and making him part of the process also puts him somewhat in your shoes, increasing his potential for empathizing with you.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Puppies have different needs from grown dogs.
2. Puppies bark when taken from their mothers too soon.
3. Comfort barking puppies with a ticking clock, a radio or television, or a shirt that smells like you.
4. Lonely puppies grow into lonely dogs unless his barking is addressed in early life.
5. Help your puppy enjoy time alone: don’t spend every waking minute with him.
6. Some owners want their dogs to “need” them, which stops them from preventing inappropriate barking.
7. “Comforting” your pup only makes things worse.
8. Ignore barking – leave the room and return when he quiets down.
9. Plan to start training by two months of age.
10. Put puppy in his bed before leaving him alone.
11. Practice leaving and returning to your puppy. Reward him for not barking!
12. Lonely puppies may also bark at other things.
13. Neighbors can help you train your dog.

Hello and Goodbyes

Sometimes the way we say goodbye to a dog stresses him, making him think he'll never see us again. Some experts recommend that you not tell your dog when you're leaving; just come and go as you please. If that feels too weird to you, try toning down your farewell, substituting a casual goodbye and a casual greeting upon arrival. If that doesn't help, try not saying hello or goodbye at all, sending your dog the message that coming and going is totally unremarkable. I would try casual hellos and good-byes first: dogs certainly notice when their people leave, and it seems polite to say "goodbye" and "hello" to mark the rhythms of your day.

Some people get a lot of fun out of a big greeting from their dog when they return home each day. It's wonderful to know someone who jumps around acting thrilled every time you come home, but it's important to make sure your dog doesn't use your return as an opportunity to bark, jump on you and generally misbehave. Don't fall into the trap of giving your dog a "treat" that lets him break normal house rules: you'll only be starting something you'll have to fight later on.

"Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend: and inside a dog, it's too dark to read."

- Groucho Marx

When you're trying to teach your puppy or dog the right behaviors, consistency counts. If your puppy starts barking because something exciting is going on, take the time to correct him right away. Don't shout – dogs don't understand shouting. Just say "hush" firmly (and once you've chosen your word, ("quiet", "shush", "hush", etc.) stick with it – consistency counts here too). You may have to repeat "hush" several times, until your pup gets the point. Once the dog stops barking, wait a few seconds while maintaining eye contact to make sure he is finished and not just taking a big breath, then praise him and pat him, and tell him how good he is.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Be casual with saying hello and goodbye.
2. Teach and expect good behavior at greetings.
3. Be consistent with training and with training words you use.
4. Don't give treats when you come home.
5. Be consistent: correct barking right away, every time.
6. Once barking stops, wait a few seconds while maintaining eye contact, then pat and praise.

Barking Boredom

Some dogs, especially breeds that have historically been used as working or hunting animals, get bored when they have nothing to do. The frustration of having nothing to do causes them to bark. And bark. And bark. Ideally, dogs have room to run, but since many accompany humans to live in the city, the responsible pet-person will make sure that his canine companion has things to keep him occupied. Regular walks are a must, and extra periods of play give your dog something to look forward to. Play acts on dogs as it does on people – physical exercise puts us in a better mood, loosens up our muscles and joints and helps everyone sleep better at night. One way to deal with doggie ennui is to provide your dog with toys that he can play with while you're occupied.

"A dog is not "almost human," and I know of no greater insult to the canine race than to describe it as such."

- John Holmes

Ideally, you will be able to set aside regular times for walking and play, so your dog knows that play-time is right after you come home from work, and walks happen in the morning and at night. Like us, dogs like to have something to look forward to, and a dog who can depend on scheduled activities is likely to suffer less from anxiety and boredom.

Another way to combat boredom is by teaching your dog games you can play together. Hide and seek is one, where you teach him to search for someone or something you have hidden. You can start by playing these games in the house, so that once your dog has learned what "Go search!" means, you can move out into the backyard, or the woods.

Obedience training is a great way to work with your dog. Learning a set of skills together keeps you both from being bored and builds trust in your relationship. Your dog learns that you mean what you say and you learn things about his intelligence that you might not otherwise discover. Obedience training is good for people too – dog-training has been used therapeutically with emotionally disturbed youth, autistic children and developmentally disabled folk. There is something healing about working with a dog on a regular basis: it stabilizes and enriches our emotions and teaches us lessons about trust and meaning we may not get from other people.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Bored dogs bark
2. Walk, play games and exercise your dog.
3. Schedule activities on a consistent basis –at regular times through each day.
4. Obedience training builds your relationship with your dog.

Barking by Breed

The American Kennel Society recognizes seven different types of dogs: Hounds, Working Dogs, Sporting Dogs, Herding Dogs, Terriers, Toy Dogs and Non-Sporting Dogs. If you're in the fortunate position of being able to choose a dog, you can research the breeds before deciding on the type of dog whose lifestyle will best fit yours. If you live in a Manhattan studio, you may need a toy breed – a dog that can fit into a beach bag is compact and portable. If you live in Montana, you may want a Labrador retriever or a large dog—a dog that can hold its own against coyotes, not a pooch who could be a quick snack for an eagle. If you want a dog you can teach to fetch and find, you may decide on a retriever or even a hound. Think about the way you like to live (are you the outdoorsy type or a bookworm?), before choosing the dog who will share your life.

“The great pleasure of a dog is that you may make a fool of yourself with him and not only will he not scold you, but he will make a fool of himself too.”

Samuel Butler

Along with different sizes and temperaments, breeds differ in the way (and amount) that they bark. Some dog breeds, such as the various and varied Terriers, tend to bark more than others. Terriers in particular can be “yappy”, since they are smaller and have shorter vocal chords. They also tend to be excitable and tenacious – a perfect recipe for extended barking. Hound dogs have been bred to sing out when they have treed or cornered their prey: they bark, howl or bay, and their voices can cover some distance.

Pointers, retrievers, spaniels and setters comprise the Sporting Group, and tend to be happy, alert and companionable dogs. Sporting dogs were originally bred to hunt birds, and they need a lot of exercise in order to stay happy. You will find dogs in this group who only bark when they need to, and others who bark too much. Much depends on how they are treated and trained.

Working dogs were originally bred to haul carts and sleds, and to perform rescue and guard work. Great Danes, Doberman Pinschers, Newfoundlands, and Alaskan Malamutes are four in a long list of dogs in this group. The first thing you'll notice when looking at the American Kennel Club's list of Working dogs, is that most of them are Big Dogs with a capital D. Some will bark like crazy and others will rarely bark at all – it's an individual thing. When a working dog does bark, it'll probably be a big, deep bark.

Herding dogs were once part of the Working Dog class, and were bred for guarding and herding groups of animals such as sheep, goats and cattle. Even a herding dog who has never left the city will instinctively “herd” members of the family, other pets or the person on the end of the leash. Herding dogs tend to be possessive of their people, and some may treat strangers – as wolves – with suspicion. Such dogs may be especially prone to barking at strangers or delivery-persons.

Toy dogs aren’t especially known for barking overmuch or for maintaining strict silence either, but because they are so small, their voices tend to be high and sharp.

Non-sporting dogs and the Miscellaneous Breed group are a widely diverse group of animals: individual temperament, breed, history and training will determine your dog’s tendency to bark, whine, howl or otherwise communicate vocally.

You can look up individual breed characteristics at the American Kennel Club’s website (www.akc.org/breeds) before getting a new dog, and it’s a good idea to speak with breeders and owners too. For those of us who already have a vociferous canine, we can at least become aware of the breed’s natural tendency to bark, which may help us understand if a dog is barking because he comes from a long line of barkers, or if there is some psychological (and more manageable) reason for all that noise. (If you want a dog that doesn’t bark, there is a breed called Basenji that talks a little but doesn’t actually say “Woof”.)

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. All dogs bark, and barking is useful.
2. Different breeds of dog bark differently and tend to bark in different situations
3. Small dogs have higher voices.
4. There is only one dog that doesn’t bark; the Basenji.

Territorial Barking

Dogs often bark to protect their territory from intruders and other animals. That's not a bad thing, really: a barking dog has been known to swiftly deter potential housebreakers and mischief-makers. It's when the dog keeps barking after the threat is gone (or when the threat isn't real), that we have a problem with it. Some territorial barking may be taken care of by changing physical cues that set your dog off. If your dog barks at the kids on their way to school every morning, moving him to the back yard may be all that's necessary to solve the problem. If your dog barks like a maniac when the mail arrives, shutting him in the kitchen beforehand might do the trick. If you suspect your dog is a territorial barker, pay attention to the things that set him or her off and think about creative ways to avoid the cues in the first place. *(Sometimes even removing the dog from the cue won't help because the dog encounters new cues in the new location. A friend of mine brought a high-spirited if dopey adolescent Great Dane to his downtown home because the animal, who had been living on a farm, had killed a deer. His people rationalized that Scooby wouldn't be able to find a deer in the middle of Champaign, Illinois, and found him a new home as a town dog. The location changed, but the behavior didn't, much. Scooby just transferred his love for chasing (and biting) to UPS men. Maybe it was the brown uniforms.)*

"I would rather see the portrait of a dog that I know, than all the allegorical paintings they can show me in the world."

Samuel Johnson

Some territorial barkers are operating out of a sense of anxiety at having their territory invaded or threatened by others. If you have tried and failed with other ways of stopping your territorial dog from barking too much, and if the problem is serious and threatening to your dog's safety in the community, you may consider using drugs. Dr. Mike Richards (DVM) at www.vetinfo.com recommends some anti-anxiolytics used also with anxious people – Elavil, Prozac and Clomicalm. Highly anxious dogs may feel calmer, and bark less, on medication. (Obviously, you should only use medication if your dog has a real problem that professional training hasn't solved. Medications have side effects, are costly, and have to be administered on a regular basis. For the same amount of time and effort and much less money, make a solid effort at training or having your dog professionally trained before giving up and resorting to medications.)

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Territorial barking may stem from anxiety or instinct to protect the dog's space and family.
2. Sometimes you can move the dog to change (or remove) the trigger.
3. You can teach a territorial dog not to bark!
4. Some dogs are too anxious; only after training fails, consider medication.

Extinguishing the Behavior

Psychological theory says that if a behavior is not reinforced (responded to either positively or negatively), the behavior will disappear, or be “extinguished”. Without paying particular attention to your circumstances, it’s really hard to say whether your dog barks for his own reasons, or whether the way you respond to your dog’s barking is actually increasing the unwanted behavior. If your dog barks and you yell at him to shut up, you are reinforcing the barking. Even though yelling at your dog seems like a negative thing to you, your dog is getting your attention, which is reinforcing in itself. He may even think you’re joining in on the barking, which is fun and will keep him barking. If he’s a little high-strung, the noise you make may be stressing him, making him bark more. If your dog seems anxious or afraid when he barks, you may attempt to soothe him with petting or even food. These behaviors certainly reinforce the barking, because your dog learns that when he barks, you will give him presents.

*“When you feel dog tired at night,
it may be because you’ve growled all
day long.”*

Unknown

I knew a man whose Golden Retriever barked maniacally every time someone came to the door, and continued barking for ten minutes after they had come inside. Since we were roommates and I came in the door at least once a day, I found it frustrating and annoying to be barked at long after Lucky and I were well acquainted. I couldn’t understand why she needed to keep barking once she knew who I was and had decided she liked me (we played “fetch” endlessly). I started to understand what was really going on when I stopped watching the dog and started watching the man. I discovered that, although he would say something to her, “Oh, stop, Lucky”, he only said it once, in the tone of an indulgent parent who really doesn’t mean it but feels like he should say something. He really didn’t intend for her to stop. He actually smiled when she barked; he liked it! I never completely figured out what he got from her barking, but I did note that he was a quiet and soft-spoken man who spent a lot of time working alone at home. The problem with working at home is people tend to think that if you’re home, you’re not “really working”, so they feel free to call and drop in any time they like. Perhaps the dog was voicing the frustration her man felt when being interrupted by other people. Being a Golden Retriever, she was pretty good at intuiting what her human wanted from her, and she had the genetic predisposition to bark anyway, so she barked like crazy.

Changing your part in the barking process may be all you need to help your dog make a change. Ideally, all you would have to do to extinguish the barking is to ignore it totally. Wouldn't that be nice! Once in awhile, ignoring completely works, but usually you've already tried that and given up because your dog learns that if he just barks long and loud enough, you will eventually give him some attention. Added to ignoring the behavior, you can remove yourself from the equation by leaving the room when the dog barks. This works on two levels: it tells your dog that barking doesn't get him a verbal response, petting, feeding or anything else from you. On the second level, your leaving the room is something your dog probably doesn't want. So, he gets no reinforcement, and your leaving is a subtly punishing consequence of his barking. It doesn't hurt him. but it doesn't make him happy, either.

If your dog only barks at certain times (or certain people), and you can't remove the cues, you can use targeted training to teach him to stop. You can use Bark Prevention Training combined with the cues that set him off to teach him not to bark at delivery people, buses, and other dogs; whatever. Bark Prevention Training is the heart of this book, and the preferred method for stopping unwanted barking. It is excellent in that it provides activity, promotes daily shared time and builds your relationship with your dog. Simply working together can cure the symptoms of barking by relieving boredom and loneliness, and can lessen anxiety by teaching your dog his place in your "pack". It also gives you something to build on: once you've started working with your dog, you may find that training gives you a new way to communicate with each other.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. When you respond to barking by giving your dog any attention (good or bad), you are reinforcing the behavior and causing it to continue.
2. Yelling, comforting or feeding your dog when he barks also reinforces the behavior.
3. Your dog may be barking to please you: make sure you really want him to stop!
4. Benefits from Bark Prevention Training include shared time and activity, alleviation of loneliness and boredom, reinforcement of pack structure, and communication and relationship building between you and your dog.

A Little Background on Pack Behavior

Dogs, like wolves, are raised with an innate sense of social inequality that sometimes makes people very uncomfortable. Although there are still packs of wild dogs roaming some parts of the world, the ones we come to know live with people, becoming part of a human “pack”. But dogs still comprehend the world in terms of the wolf-dog ethic. We can talk about the natural pack instinct in dogs by referring to their close relative, the wolf.

“My husband and I are either going to buy a dog or have a child. We can’t decide whether to ruin our carpets or ruin our lives.”

Rita Rudner

Wolves and wild dogs live in a hierarchical society, governed by rules and understandings that to humans would be extremely unfair. Wolves would laugh (if they laughed) at our ideas of social equality (although it has only been in the past few years that biologists realized that sexual equality forms the basis of wolf civilization. A female graduate student observed packs where the alpha animal was the female, and took the time and energy to point it out to her older, male professors, who finally saw it too). Some wolves really are “superior” to others, having first rights to mating and reproduction as well as having responsibilities in pack leadership such as providing food and protection for the others. There are “alpha” animals, male or female (or an alpha couple), who lead each pack and to whom others in the pack defer. The alpha male or female makes decisions about where and when the pack hunts, eats, sleeps and breeds. It also determines who stays in the pack, and may oust or kill outright other animals that for reasons of aggression, character, illness or age don’t fit into the structure of the pack. The alpha animal regularly backs up and reinforces its authority by fighting those who may challenge it. When a younger, stronger animal prevails, the pack acquires a new leader.

Wolves fight a lot; over food, over sex, over places to lie down and sleep. Occasional fights break out in the way that three-year-old humans squabble over the crayon box (only picture bared fangs and loud, snarling barks.) When one wolf asserts its dominance over the other, the submissive wolf either runs away or rolls over on its back, exposing its belly to the dominant animal; basically saying, “I give; you’re the boss”. The point in rolling over

is acknowledging that the dominant animal could, if it wanted, kill the submissive one by tearing open its stomach. Rolling over may also serve to protect the submissive animal by recalling to the dominant one the way helpless puppies roll and tumble about. The submissive wolf, by looking vulnerable, may cause the more aggressive wolf to see him as something puppy-like; to be protected rather than viewed as a threat.

Anyone who's witnessed a dog fight has seen the open-mouthed snarling, barking and really frightening attacks that even smaller dogs can make on one another, and wolf fights are even more disturbing to the two-footed observer. But in fact, they're just doing what comes naturally (in Nature, anyway, if not in your local dog park). There is something terrifying about the way that dogs and wolves fight – the lunging, the frightening faces, the horrid noises are all designed by Nature to help the animals decide who the boss will be, thus furthering the advancement of the pack.

When wolves chastise their young, they tend to bite them on the face and neck, using really sharp nips to keep the pups under control. The pups screech loudly, and it all looks pretty brutal to people, but it also serves as a lesson to us: the way you treat your dog tells him or her whether you are capable of leading the pack. Organizational theory (sometimes disturbingly close to observations of Nature at her more brutal), underscores the importance of hierarchy. People, like pack animals, feel much more secure when they know the rules, know who's in charge, and in particular, who is accountable. Great leaders don't just boss people around –they take responsibility for themselves and for the gains and losses of the greater organization. Pack leaders do the same, and for your dog to feel comfortable and secure living in your human pack, you have to set aside political notions of inter-species social equality and take on the responsibility of being the boss. It doesn't mean that you're going to bite your dog when he makes a mistake, but it does mean that you're going to expect him to follow your rules, that you're going to teach him what he needs to know, reinforce his behavior consistently and provide feedback and remediation when he makes mistakes. Reading books like this one helps you understand dog culture even while teaching your dog what he needs to know to live peacefully in human culture.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Wolves and dogs see the world in terms of pack structure.
2. Every pack needs an "alpha", a leader.
3. It's your responsibility to lead your pack.
4. Being the alpha means choosing, teaching and reinforcing rules that are useful for the health of the pack.
5. Your job is to help your dog understand the rules of the human community.

The Egalitarian Ethic – Dogs Don't Get It

“A really companionable and indispensable dog is an accident of nature. You can't get it by breeding for it, and you can't buy it with money. It just happens along.”

E B White,

The Care and Training of a Dog

Understanding pack behavior gives you an idea of the way your dog will understand your behavior in relation to all things dog-related. Because pack society is based on the idea that, out of two creatures, one will dominate, the first thing your dog wants to know is who's in charge. This is where many perfectly nice people end up with perfectly dreadful dogs, because they (the people) believe that by not “dominating” (teaching, rewarding and disciplining) the dog, they are creating a relationship based on respect. In fact, by not dominating the dog, they are causing a situation whereby the dog must (by all dogs hold worthy) be the dominant one. This too-common mistake not only ruins the upholstery, but is unfair to the dog. When you move to Australia to run with a pack of dingoes, Fido can be in charge, but as long as you are legally liable for your dog's misfortunes in human society, you have to be the alpha animal in the relationship. You are your dog's interpreter and teacher of human culture: your dog's happiness and his very life depend on the way you help him interact with human society.

Setion Summary and Action Steps

1. There always has to be an alpha-dog. This had better be you.
2. “Dominant” behavior includes teaching, rewarding and disciplining.
3. You can be the dominant alpha-dog and still respect your dog.
4. You are your dog's link to the human world.
5. You are legally liable and ethically responsible for your dog's behavior.

How to Talk to Your Dog

Just as Lucky the Golden Retriever understood that her human didn't really want her to stop barking, your dog will understand your intention better than your actual words. They say that eighty-five percent of human communication is non-verbal, and we actually understand the vocabulary! Dogs, who may master fifty words out of the whole language of tens of thousands, are especially apt at grasping your meaning over the actual syllables you speak. That's why, when you talk to your dog in training, it's important to be consistent in your intention and presentation – you have to act like you mean it.

Like Lucky's human, who told her to "stop barking" more as a nod to what was expected of him by other people than as an actual command to Lucky, many people may say one thing and mean another when working with their dogs. Just as your mother probably had an, "and I mean it!" tone of voice that she used to get your attention, you need to foster a friendly, but "I mean it" attitude when you are telling your dog what to do. It isn't a combative stance; it's a feeling of confidence and assurance that asserts your authority with your dog while telling him that you know he'll comply with your command.

*"I think we are drawn to dogs
because they are the uninhibited
creatures we might be if we weren't
certain we knew better."*

*George Bird Evans,
"Troubles with Bird Dogs"*

In order for your dog to take what you say seriously, you have to take it seriously first. When you are teaching your dog with commands, make eye contact with him, making sure that you have his attention. Speak the command clearly and in a slightly emphatic (but not necessarily loud) voice. Use a slightly lower voice than your tone in normal conversation – big dogs have lower voices, and whether it's some complex canine psychology or just that lower voices are easier to hear, dogs listen best to deeper voices. Using a slightly deeper voice consistently in training also sets it aside as your "training voice", which may further aid in getting your dog's attention in the future. (If you do use a slightly different voice in training, be sure and use it consistently when commanding your dog.)

If your dog is ignoring your commands so that you often have to repeat them, first check the way you are talking. Some people (especially women, who are socialized to be more tentative), tend to give commands with

a questioning tone of voice, more like requests than orders. Although a hesitant tone may be considered polite when ordering a cup of coffee at the local diner, it's confusing to a dog who hears you say, "hush?" The question mark in your voice may overrule the command, translating into something like, "Gee, it would be nice if you stopped barking at some point, but I'm really not sure if I can really ask that of you". This is an example of ways that humans may send mixed messages to dogs, adding confusion to the relationship. If you tell your dog "hush?" you are casting him upon his own resources. A dog with a dominant nature will think, "Clearly you don't mean that," and will continue to bark. A dog with a more anxious-to-please character may feel confused and frustrated – which he may give voice to by barking even more. Either way, the dog comes to view you as someone who is uncertain of your expectations – and that way, (to quote Shakespeare), madness lies.

Bill Cosby remarked that the upside of dealing with a toddler is that, when you say "come here" and she strolls away, you can make "come here" a reality by picking her up and bringing her "here". The newest baby-sitter understands immediately that if you say "come here" and you mean it, then you'd better be ready to chase that little kid down when she ignores you, or you'll wind up trapped in the garage while the child who locked you in washes the cat down with salad dressing.

All this is to say that, especially when there's some doubt in your dog's mind about who the boss is, there will be times when you have to back up your commands with action. Later in this book, we will cover the better-known methods of getting your dog's attention. For now, it's enough to realize that your dog may decide to ignore or outright defy your commands, and that it's your job to respond firmly and decisively when that happens.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Take training seriously: act like you mean it.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Make sure you have your dog's attention.
4. Use a slightly lower, more emphatic voice when giving commands. Speak clearly.
5. Use this "training voice" consistently, so your dog recognizes it.
6. A questioning, hesitant, "polite" tone of voice sends a mixed message and confuses your dog.
7. If your dog ignores or defies you, expect to correct his misbehavior.

Bark Prevention Training

One way to stop your dog from barking is, paradoxically, to teach your dog to bark! This training serves three purposes: first, it means you will be giving your dog positive attention for a certain period every day while you are training him to bark. Many dogs bark to get attention, and keep barking because the negative attention they get is still preferable to no attention at all. Training your dog to do anything is providing him with attention from you at an appropriate time, and may serve to reduce extraneous barking by making your dog feel appreciated and recognized by you.

Secondly, teaching your dog to bark gives him some work to do, reducing boredom. Again, the mere fact of training gives you and your animal something to do together and gives him something challenging to learn. If your dog frequently gets bored, the kindest thing you can do is to work with him every day (even if it's only for a few minutes) on some sort of training.

*"Even the tiniest Poodle or
Chihuahua is still a wolf at heart."*

*Dorothy Hinshaw Patent,
Dogs: The Wolf Within*

Lastly, when you teach your dog to "speak", you follow up his learning that skill by teaching him to "hush"). By rewarding your dog when he barks because you asked him to, you are also teaching him that he should bark when you say so. (It's a slight distinction to us, but it means something to the dog). If he barks when you don't tell him to, he hasn't learned the rules of the game yet. So first, teach him to bark. Then teach him to be quiet.

You can teach most dogs to bark by using food as reinforcement. Hold a piece of his favorite snack up where he can see it, and say, "Speak!" (or "Speak, Fifi!", or whatever his name is.). If your dog is inclined to bark for general self-expression, he will probably bark to ask you to give up the snack. When he barks right after you say, "Speak!", give him the treat and tell him what a good dog he is. (It's important to use both reinforcements of food and praise because one day you want him to obey without being bribed with treats. Otherwise, your pockets will always smell of liver bits.) Practice "Speak" daily until he understands that when you say, "Speak!" he should bark in order to get a treat. If he barks when you haven't asked him to immediately beforehand, don't give him a treat; ignore the bark.

Next, teach him to stop barking. Ask him to speak and let him bark repeatedly until you say, "hush" and he (eventually and after much

prompting from you), hushes. Then and only then, give him the treat. Now he is learning that when he stops barking, he gets a treat. Practice having your dog speak and hush for ten minutes once or twice every day until you can feel confident that he understands and will follow both commands. How long this takes depends on two things; you, and your dog. If you really do practice with your dog every single day, you're going to see much faster results than if you just do it a couple of times a week. Think about it: you and your dog are basically studying together, and he needs to practice new skills over and over on a consistent basis in order to really remember them and perform them correctly. All things being equal, if you work with your dog every day, you'll be seeing good results by the end of the first week, and you'll probably be feeling quite confident by the end of the second. Now you're getting somewhere!

If you seriously work with your dog for two weeks and you're still having problems getting him to speak and hush, your dog may have an unusual problem. Either there's a big dominance issue between the two of you, or there may be a physical interference, such as pain, hearing loss or illness. Discuss the problem with your vet, and if your dog's check-up seems to be fine, invest in a trainer who can watch you together and spot problems that the layperson might not see.)

Once you feel your dog has grasped the idea that he gets a treat once the barking stops, you are on your way to being able to reward him for not barking at all. This is tricky, because now we're talking about the way you have been conditioned to respond to your dog's noisiness. At this point, you have to learn to respond to your dog's silence! The problem with silence is, it's easy to ignore it, because it doesn't intrude on you the way unwanted sound does. So once you've moved into this final stage of training, make an especial effort to be aware of times when your dog once used to bark, and reward him for his silence.

If a dog who has always barked his brains out every time the mailman arrives stops barking at the mailman, take a moment to encourage his new behavior. Tell him what a good dog he is. In the beginning, you may even want to keep a few treats by the door so you can offer him a substantial bribe for giving up that old, bad habit. If the force of habit is too strong for him, help him out with a training reminder: say, "hush" and when he stops barking, give him a treat and encourage him.

Once in awhile a dog takes a real and personal offense to the mailman, and the barking is more than just to get your attention: he'd really like to eat the mailman. If the usual bark prevention methods aren't putting a dent in the drama around daily mail delivery, talk to the postal employee yourself. If you have a mail slot, you can try simple bribery to change your pet's mind. Arrange to leave dog treats outside the door, sealed in a coffee can to keep

them dry and animal-proof. When the mailman arrives, he can first push a treat through the mail slot, then follow up with the mail. Dogs are open-minded about using food to create and solidify friendships!

The mailman is a great example for targeted desensitization training. If your otherwise good dog goes berzerk over a particular person or thing, focus on that thing and work on it. Now that you have the power of Bark Prevention Training working for you, you can target specific areas and solve the problems that have been bothering you all along.

In the case of the mailman, you can work with your dog every day around the time the mail comes. If you can, have your dog “sit” right before he would normally start barking, and give him a treat and some praise for a good sit. This is good in two ways: it gives him something else to occupy his attention, and it’s harder to bark with a treat in his mouth. If he starts to bark anyway, tell him to “hush”, and give him a treat once he’s stayed hushed for five seconds. Your goal is to keep him sitting and hushed, so have a few treats on hand. Maintain eye contact with him the whole time the postman is there and until after he’s gone next door. You’re letting your dog know there’s a new routine for the postman, and that you’re serious about the routine. Don’t turn your attention to anything else –if the phone rings, ignore it.

If your dog has been barking at the postman for years and years, don’t expect him to give it up after a few lessons. Expect to make this routine part of your routine for at least a month – and that’s with daily practice! But focus on your goal. One day in the not-too-distant future, when the postman arrives, your dog will sit down and wait quietly for him to leave.

Obviously, the postman in the example above could also be the Culligan man, the garbage man, the Avon “man”, the Girl Scout “man”. It’s much harder to train specifically when the visit is unanticipated, but if your dog barks at anyone who comes to the door, you can also practice intensively by having a friend come to the door about ten times a day for the weekend, using the same “sit” and “hush” technology described above.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Teach to “speak”.

Make eye contact: get your dog’s attention

Hold the treat where he can say it

Say, “Speak”

When he speaks, give him the treat and praise him.

Repeat repeatedly! Practice daily until he can speak on command.

2. Train to “hush”

Tell dog to “speak” and encourage him to keep barking.

Say, "hush". If he stops right then, praise him and give him the treat. If he doesn't stop right away, repeat the command to hush until he does.

Wait a few seconds to make sure he's staying hushed, then praise and give him the treat.

Practice daily!

Expect it to take some time!

3. Use bribes to help your dog like people he has barked at before. Have the postman push a treat through the door whenever delivering mail.
4. For specific people or situations, use targeted training after teaching "speak" and "hush".

Make eye contact: get your dog's attention

Just before he would usually start to bark, tell him to "sit". When he does, give him a treat and praise him.

When he starts to bark, tell him to "hush". When he does, praise and treat. If he starts barking again, remind him to hush, and praise and treat when he does.

Practice daily, and expect it to take some weeks! (Not hours, not days; weeks).

5. Pay attention and reward your dog when he's quiet instead of barking. Notice his changed behavior and continue to reward it.

Dogs in Trucks

I'm sure this has happened to everyone at some point in time. You park your car and get out, thinking about the groceries you need to buy or the ticket you need to pay, and suddenly you are frightened out of your mind by a tremendous "Woof!". You didn't see the dog behind the dark window of the truck you parked next to, but she saw you, and in typical doggie humor, waited until your face was good and close to her window before scaring you into an undignified, if brief, dance of momentary terror.

If you happen to have a dog with such a sense of humor, or the kind who continues barking at every passer-by from the safety of your automobile, you can train her using the same Bark Prevention Training. Just move the training venue to your car. Ideally you have two trainers in this situation, although you can do it alone. If you have a friend who's willing to help (every day for at least a week), you can put the dog in her usual seat, and get into the driver seat yourself. Then get out of the car just like you usually do, and walk to the back, behind the car. Now, your friend walks up to the car as the unsuspecting pedestrian and receives the bark. When your dog barks, run around to the window where your friend is, and give your dog the "Hush" command. When she quiets, give her a treat. Then repeat as many times as it seems feasible (until your friend looks at his watch and declares he can't believe the time). Try to do it every day until you're sure your dog has gotten it. If you can, take it on the road as well, driving to the store or the library and practicing the new skill.

"If dogs could talk it would take a lot of the fun out of owning one."

Andy Rooney

If you want to work with your dog alone on this project, you can get in the back seat with her (or if she rides in the front passenger seat, stay in the driver's), and wait for passersby to come along, then quiet her when she barks. You'll have to experiment: some dogs won't bark at strangers if their human is nearby, either because they figure if the lead dog (that's you) isn't barking they don't need to, or because they know they shouldn't be barking and only do it for fun when you aren't around.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. If your dog barks from the car, train her in the car with the help of a friend.

More Dogs in Trucks

Dogs love to ride in pick-ups. I was recently in Houston, Texas, and every Chevy had at least one big dog in the back. Deliriously happy, ears flapping in the wind, eyes tearing, mouth agape. Then there's the dog-in-the-back who can only express his joy by barking at every living thing he passes, or that passes him. Train this dog the same way you do the house-bound barker, teaching him to "speak" and to "hush". If this dog only barks (or mainly barks) from the back of your truck, get a friend to drive, climb in the back and do the training there. Use the "sit" and "hush" combination to distract him from barking, and start at a low speed in a place where you'll only see a few people. Train him to sit at the start of the ride, and keep reminding him to sit whenever he forgets, rewarding each sit with praise and a treat. As soon as he barks, tell him to "hush", and reward him when he does. Gradually (over days of training) increase the speed of the truck and start visiting more populated places, keeping him with the "sit and hush" routine. Don't even take him with you on rides to the store unless someone can sit in the back to continue training, or you'll be giving him intermittent reinforcement and undoing your previous work. This is going to take time and persistence, but don't give up!

"They [dogs] never talk about themselves but listen to you while you talk about yourself, and keep up an appearance of being interested in the conversation."

Jerome K. Jerome

Your goal here is to get your dog into the habit of staying seated and quiet during rides. Over time, you will start putting the trainer in the front of the cab with the driver for part of the ride, then little-by-little doing away with having a second person in the back altogether while your dog stays seated and hushed.

Once your dog starts riding alone without barking, remember to still reward him at the end of each ride. Get him in the truck, tell him to sit and hush (he may not be barking, but he knows that "hush" means "be quiet" by now), and take your ride. At the end, tell him what a good dog he was and give him a treat before taking him out of the pickup. This helps solidify his understanding that he was good in the truck.

(And maybe this is a good time to mention doggie pick-up safety. Does your dog bounce around in the back, stepping up on the wheel wells to get a better view? Is he tied with a rope short enough to keep him in the truck bed, but long enough for him to lie down?)

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. If your dog barks from the back of the truck, get a friend to drive while you ride in the back for training. Apply targeted Bark Prevention techniques.
2. Only bring your dog along if you can provide someone to sit in the back with him and continue training.
3. Over time, have the trainer move to the front seat for longer and longer parts of the ride until one day you no longer need someone to remind your dog to behave.
4. Once your dog can ride quietly alone, continue to reward and treat him for good behavior in the truck.

Soda Can Distraction and Squirt Bottle Deeds

If your dog gets into a barking “zone” and can’t be stopped, there are two simple methods of distraction you might use to break the cycle. The non-invasive version is nothing more than a soda can with a couple of dozen pennies in it, which has been taped shut so the coins don’t fall out. When your dog enters the bark zone and you want to yell (you must not yell) at her, give the can a good shake or two while saying “hush”. The noise should distract your barker long enough to shut her up, at which time you can finally say, “good dog,” and give her a treat. Always pair the can shaking with a “hush” signal so that eventually the dog understands the “hush” signal even when you’ve stopped using the soda can. (Let’s face it, you probably don’t want to carry a soda can for the rest of your life).

*“When a dog wags her tail and barks
at the same time, how do you know
which end to believe?”*

Anonymous

If the soda can trick fails, the more intrusive alternative is a spray bottle of water. Squinting the barking dog (while saying “hush”) may also provide a momentary break in the barking, while your dog tries to figure out what just happened. Again, your cue to say, “good dog” and break out the treat. You will hear some people suggesting that you squirt the dog in the face. It’s damned unpleasant to be squirted in the face, and it’s hard to squirt someone in the face without hitting the eyes. Dogs who have been disciplined or punished by nose-smacking or other facial interference are more likely to feel threatened when approached face-to-face at other times, and are also more likely to bite. It’s much preferable to squirt your dog’s shoulder or backside.

Keep in mind that your dog should never be frightened or hurt by training – fear almost always guarantees a failure to learn.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Use a soda can or squirt bottle to interrupt your dog when he’s barking.
2. Keep giving the “hush” command while using other interventions, so your dog eventually learns what “hush” means.
3. Never squirt in the face.
4. Never scare or hurt your dog!

The Bean Bag Toss

Some trainers recommend using bean bags to interrupt your dog's barking. Small bean bags, (three or four inches square) with their rattler interiors, can cause puzzlement and wonder as they come flying past a dog whose concentration has been up to now caught up in producing prodigious barks. Bean bags have the advantage over squirt bottles in that they are easier to carry around in your pockets or under the seat of the car, and they don't need refilling, just periodic recollecting. They are lighter than coin-stuffed soda cans, and serve the same purpose by causing your dog to shut up long enough for you to say (with some relief), "Good dog". Again, don't aim at your dog's face, but throw the bag so that it either gently smacks his shoulder, side or hindquarters, or so it flies through his line of vision.

"Newfoundland dogs are good to save children from drowning, but you must have a pond of water handy and a child, or else there will be no profit in boarding a Newfoundland."

Josh Billings

The down side of bean bags is that although some dogs treat them as objects to be respected and avoided, other dogs may see them as toys. If your dog thinks that bean bags are things to catch, worry or tear up, they won't work as training aids. One way to keep your dog from playing with bean bags is to only use them for training, and not to leave them lying around the house with other toys. If your dog starts out seeing bean bags as toys, expect to use a different training aid.

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Use small bean bags to stop barking.
2. Don't aim at the face.
3. Keep bean bags only as training aids: never use as toys!
4. A dog who plays with bean bags can't be trained with them.

All in the Family

You'll read this several times in this text, because repetition is the soul of education, and we aren't just talking about teaching dogs here: we are talking about teaching humans to teach their dogs; fairly, consistently and effectively. All the humans in the household pack should help with the training for the sake of consistency. It's not very helpful to a dog to have one person encouraging her to bark while another is hushing her. Make sure everyone in the household is on board with Bark Prevention Training so that the dog will not suffer any confusion about what she is supposed to do. Also, make sure everyone uses the same command words, or you'll be confusing your dog and lessening the effectiveness of training. If you say "hush" to our dog and I say "quiet" instead, the poor dog is left trying to figure out the difference between what we're asking her to do.

*"Things that upset a terrier may
pass virtually unnoticed by a Great
Dane."*

Smiley Blanton

Section Summary and Action Steps

1. Let all family members train the dog in the same way.
2. Everyone should use the same command words.

Your Neighbor's Dog

Maybe you don't want to fill out forms and fight your neighbor. Or maybe you are surrounded by barking dogs and either have to learn to deal with it or move away. I'm going to start with a few simple ideas that may solve your problem while allowing your neighbor's dog to bark until Kingdom Come. When you're chewing your pillow in half at two in the morning, you may not have many positive solutions in mind, but these may be the simplest answers to a tough problem.

Earplugs: Self-explanatory!

Noise-Canceling Earphones: They can be used to listen to music without other sounds interfering; they can also be used for pure, sweet silence. The good ones are a little pricy – two or three hundred dollars. But if they keep you sane, they are cheap at twice the price!

White Noise Machine: If you hate things on or in your ears, a white noise machine may be the answer. This machine generates a “neutral” sound, like static on television, that absorbs other sounds. Some people find it very soothing!

Radio or CDs: Some people can fall asleep to music; others can't. You might be able to train yourself to fall asleep to music over time, by experimenting with type of music and volume levels.

Air Filter: This is my personal favorite, because it also cleans the air, making it easier to fall asleep because you're breathing more comfortably! Make sure you get one that makes noise – it will sound like the white noise machine.

There is another solution, which I have used occasionally with some success. My neighbors' apartment is situated so that, when they go out and leave their incessantly-barking Papillon, he is stationed directly over my bedroom. He barks every second until they return, but since they usually take him along, and since I know that they adopted him from a rescue organization, it's not worth my time and energy to fight them. Even if they tried to train him not to bark, this little dog was severely neglected as a

“I've seen a look in dogs' eyes, a quickly vanishing look of amazed contempt, and I am convinced that basically dogs think humans are nuts.”

John Steinbeck

puppy; he's probably not going to improve. So I did the unthinkable; I slept in the living-room! You can't hear the barking from the other side of my apartment, the futon and couch are comfortable enough, and it was kind of fun in the way that building a fort in the backyard was when we were kids. If the idea of changing your sleeping venue doesn't chafe you, sleep someplace else!

If you've tried the easy solutions and they haven't worked, it's time to move on to new strategies. We all know the accepted wisdom about stopping your neighbor's dog from barking. You go to your neighbor, present your complaint calmly and ask him solve the problem. If Leave It to Beaver is anything to go by, your neighbor will blush, offer you cake and coffee, and immediately shut the dog up for good. In the event that your neighbor tells you to go to hell and slams the door, you now have a barking dog and a neighbor who hates you. Let's go through a few possible scenarios, so you can pick out the one that fits your situation best.

We've discussed the LITB (Leave It to Beaver) scenario: the next-best one is that your neighbor really does feel bad –the dog is driving him crazy too! And he wants to solve the problem, is motivated to train the dog, but doesn't exactly know how. You can refer him to this book! If you really like him, you can buy him the book (or loan him your copy), and even help work with the dog. All this scenario takes is patience on your part; although if you aren't sure which way your neighbor will go when you approach him, there are a couple of things you can do to optimize the situation. Before you start this list, if you already know your neighbor and he's a Nazi or a gun-freak or a dope-addict or a wife-beater, don't put yourself at risk by trying to make nice. Just skip directly to Step #8. If you don't know your neighbor, contribute to world peace by giving him the benefit of the doubt.

1. Start a journal. Write down the date and time of the barking whenever you notice it. When you talk to your neighbor, write down the date and the general way the conversation went. You're practicing prevention measure for if things go awry and you later want to take a journal to court. Don't skip this step! It's a pain in the ass, and hopefully you'll never need it, but if you do, you'll certainly be glad you have it. Courts love people who bring in facts; names, dates and relevant details. If you do ever have to go to court, we want you to win.
2. Cool down. If you go over there mad, you'll be shooting yourself in the foot by putting your neighbor on the defensive. Go over there with the plan to be really nice, like June Cleaver. If he's a jerk to you you'll have plenty of time to be hateful later.

3. If you and your neighbor aren't already acquainted, don't put a lot of stress on your name or address. In fact, see if you can say something like, "Hi! I'm Jean, and I live a couple of houses over..." (waving vaguely in the wrong direction). Ideally, so he won't hear your last name until you can be somewhat sure he won't look you up in the phone book and mail you a dead catfish.
4. Bring cookies. Or beer, but only if you know he's a beer-drinker (check out his recycling bin for his favorite beverages). I know, he should be the one buying you bribes. Let's agree that life is truly unfair, and move on with what might actually work in your private war on noise. With people as with dogs, a treat goes a long way towards smoothing feelings and working towards a happy outcome for everyone. When you give him cookies, you are training your neighbor to quieten his dog!
5. Smile and be friendly. (Did I mention that?)
6. Only state your problem once and be specific. If the dog barks all day but you don't care except between 10 PM and 7 AM , ask your neighbor if there's a way to solve the problem during those hours. Don't ask for more than you need: you may just overwhelm him. Let other neighbors contact him if they want different quiet hours.
7. Offer to help. Say, "I know this great e-book on how to teach your dog to stop barking. Would you like the URL?" And if you really like dogs, offer to help train or walk the offending dog while your neighbor's out. Obviously, don't offer more than you're willing to give, in case he takes you up on it. Now you're not just being friendly, you're establishing that you are willing to go out of your way to help your neighbor meet his obligation as a pet-owner. If he doesn't meet you half-way, he's going to know he's a jerk, and so will anyone else who takes part in the situation if it escalates.
8. Assume a best outcome until your neighbor indicates otherwise.
9. If your neighbor isn't responding to your friendly, cookie-laden persuasion, you don't need to threaten him or start a fight. Don't even bother to tell him that you're going to file a complaint with the city (although that's what you're going to do). Leave as gracefully as possible and start working on the legal remedies available to you. If your neighbor's dog is barking within 25 feet of your yard, buy an ultrasonic dog-bark-stopper, read the directions and install it carefully. If this solves your problem, throw a big party! If the dog is barking near another neighbor, take what's left of the cookies over there and form an alliance

whereby you will purchase and install the device in his yard. If these solutions don't work, read on.

10. If you live in a complex or condo association, good managers will address pet problems between neighbors by contacting the offending neighbor themselves. Some will investigate the complaint so that instead of just saying, "your neighbor says", they can say with first-hand knowledge, "Your dog is barking every day between noon and 6 PM." Some cowardly, lazy, bad managers will try to tell you that it's your problem, but they're avoiding their duty to keep the place noise-free. In that situation, you're probably screwed as far as the managers go, although in some places you can take them to court for failing to provide for your right to quiet enjoyment of the premises, and in some places they can be made to pay you money for your loss. But that completely depends on the housing regulations in your county, so don't try to force the issue with your landlords unless and until you know you can win. (Don't forget to document your discussions and save your dated and signed correspondence with your landlords too. Do as much as you can in writing and make copies so you have solid pieces of evidence that you tried and tried to resolve the problem. And no matter how mad you are, make sure only to write down things that won't backfire on you in court!)

11. By the time we get to this step, we are assuming you have tried to make nice and have failed due to your neighbor being a jerk. We are also assuming you've logged all your interactions with your neighbor and the days and times the dog has been barking. This is when keeping a journal starts to pay off for you. Call your local animal shelter or the non-emergency police line to find out what agency takes and follows up on complaints. Towns have different rules and complaint procedures; find out the particulars and set about your business. Some people give up at this point, because it's a hassle. Some places make you show up in person; others have special forms to complete. Be persistent and patient. Some towns investigate after a first complaint, but many others wait until three complaints have been lodged.

12. Sometimes you can do everything right and everything fails. This is an ugly fact of life. Landlords and judges can be unfair: entire neighborhoods can be composed of endlessly-barking dogs. Do everything you can, but once you've done it all, it may be time to sigh deeply and move on. But first, read this book thoroughly and try everything!

"I Can't (or Won't) Train My Dog"

"What kind of life a dog . . . acquires. I have sometimes tried to imagine by kneeling or lying full length on the ground and looking up. The world then becomes strangely incomplete; one sees little but legs."

E V Lucas

If you can't train your dog because she won't listen to you, you have even more reason to start training right away because you have forfeited the right to lead your pack, and that is a very, very bad thing. Humans aren't really pack animals, but we still push and shove for dominance in the workplace, in school and at home. Sometimes our attempts to be modern parents or loving partners keep us from asserting our rights, and we wind up with children who walk all over us and lovers who won't share in the chores (such as disciplining those awful children, by the way). If you don't train your dog because you "respect" him, you're making a mistake about what training is all about: it isn't about asserting your dominance over your dog as much as it is about making your dog a responsible member of your family pack and the greater community. Just as it's the parents' job to make sure their children aren't endangered by their lack of life experience, it is the pet-owner's responsibility to keep pets safe by teaching them appropriate behavior.

That said, you do have to assert your dominance as far your dog understands the rules of pack leadership, or you'll end up with a dog who believes he has more rights than you. Egalitarianism doesn't work for a dog because he sees the world in a model that says there should always be a leader: if you're not the leader, he will be. Someone's got to be in charge, and that someone had better be you. Not taking charge is a way of avoiding responsibility – a common social problem these days. It's also a great way to get bitten by a dog who sees your refusal to assert dominance as an acknowledgment of your subordination.

If you don't train your dog because he makes you nervous or afraid, then there is a much larger problem: the dog has assumed the leadership position in your pack. Since you are the one who could end up in jail if Fido bites someone, you are the leader, whether you're comfortable with that or not. **If you're even a little bit afraid of your dog, hire a professional trainer to work with you and the dog until your position is clear to all three of you.** If you remain afraid of your dog (maybe you inherited the animal, or his

background has made him intractable), give the dog to someone who can manage him.

Training is preferable to buying gadgets: it is more reliable; it builds your relationship with your dog and addresses the reasons for barking rather than just considering the barking as an isolated problem. Gadgets don't work for all dogs; they range from mildly unpleasant to downright traumatic, and it's hard to tell how any particular dog will be affected by a specific device. A collar that stops one dog from barking in two days may cause another dog to become confused, depressed or even aggressive. Some dogs will take note of the stinky collars; others won't even notice the smell. You just can't tell with devices, whereas with training, you usually get good results as long as you, (the trainer) are consistent and steady. But in some cases, training may not work for you or for your dog, in which case you may decide to invest in some anti-barking paraphernalia. Here's a summary of available anti-barking devices.

Ultrasonic, Sonic Collars and Other Devices

Ultrasonic sound can be used to stop barking dogs at a distance of 25-60 feet. We can't hear the tones, but dogs can, the collar supposedly emitting an unpleasant, high-pitched sound whenever the dog barks. In collar form, the blast of sound is theoretically triggered by the dog wearing the collar, but there have been cases of collars being set off by other dogs' barking, or even by airplanes flying overhead.

There is also a box that automatically sends out an ultrasonic "stop" tone to any dog barking within range. (See "Bark Free" in this next section for a description of the best-known product of this type. There is also a manual (handheld and person-triggered) version used for training individual dogs not to bark.)

"You may have a dog that won't sit up, roll over or even cook breakfast, not because she's too stupid to learn how but because she's too smart to bother."

*Rick Horowitz,
Chicago Tribune*

The humane aspects of the ultrasonic collar are debatable. The problem is, we cannot hear in the ultrasonic range, so it's difficult for a person to determine or even to imagine the loudness of a sound we can't hear at all. However, these collars are based on the idea of using a loud noise to startle a dog into not barking.

The sonic collars operate on the same principle as the ultrasonics, but in a range that is audible to humans as well. If your dog "gets it" and is able to associate barking with a terrible noise, then the barking may stop in a few days (but it may resume once the collar is off). If your dog doesn't figure out that the loud noise comes whenever he barks, you'll have barking dog and a noisy collar both to contend with.

Bark-Free

Probably the best-known of its kind, the Bark-Free system is the desperate neighbor's solution to barking dogs. It is a box that's mounted outside as close as you can get to your neighbors' caterwauling canine, preferably aimed without fences or trees or hedges in the way. It works on the distraction model and claims to be painless but disturbing to the dog. When

the dog barks, the device senses it and emits a tone that is supposed to startle the dog and stop it from barking. Human beings can't hear the sound. It only has a 25-foot radius, so while it's fine for the dog next door, the dog across the street may be impervious to its charm. However, you may be able to talk to the other sleepless neighbor across the street and share the cost of the device, then mount it in his yard. You can use it in your own yard, or in your house, with the same caveats stated in the ultra-sonic collar section.

Citronella (Stinky) Collar

Aromatherapy is often used to make people feel more relaxed or energized, but the use of citronella for dogs may quiet them for other reasons. You're probably familiar with citronella in the form of those anti-mosquito candles for patios. The smell is kind of lemony and people don't mind it at all (although in my experience, mosquitoes don't mind it much either). Unpleasant for dogs but not inhumane, the citronella-spray collar works on the principle that a mildly unpleasant surprise can curtail barking. The collar emits a jet of citrus scent (citronella is a natural oil), which dogs are said to dislike, when they bark. Since we are nearly at the end of our list of debarking strategies, the assumption is that you've tried more behaviorally-based methods and they haven't worked. If that's true, then it may be time to try this collar. However, like the shock collar whose description follows, the citrus collar is probably mysterious to the barking dog. He's just going along doing what he's always done, and for no apparent reason, he's sprayed in the nose with something that smells nasty to him. It may put him in a bad mood until he figures out that when he barks, he gets the spray.

One website advertising such a collar says that you can reverse the effect of the collar by removing it from the dog, but then it says that dogs will learn to associate barking with being sprayed and will learn not to bark while they are wearing the collar. This assumes that the dog will always wear his collar. Another citronella collar company recommends the dog only wear the collar for 2-3 hours per day, which makes me wonder how it could be expected to work consistently if it's not being used consistently. Maybe it depends on the dog: how astute does he have to be to link the citronella spray with his barking behavior? How long will it take him to stop barking once he wears the collar, and, once the collar comes off, will the barking resume?

Another drawback to the citronella collar is that it may be set off by the barking of a nearby dog – not necessarily the one wearing the collar. Punishing a dog for something that has nothing to do with him will completely confuse him!

The Placerville Veterinary Clinic estimates that the citronella collar is twice as effective as the shock collar, and suggests that some dogs may find not

only the smell aversive, but also the hissing sound the collar makes when it puffs out the citronella.

With all the conflicting attitudes towards the citronella collar, it seems very worthwhile for a dog that has not succeeded with traditional Bark Prevention Training. It doesn't hurt the animal, although it isn't pleasant, and if it works, your problem is solved. Definitely give the citronella collar a serious attempt before moving on to more drastic measures.

Leashes

You can certainly train your dog using a leash, and some trainers recommend it. The drawback is that in leash training there always has to be someone on the other end of the leash, and that someone is you. Because consistency is the soul of training, you should use the leash all the time in a particular training situation or not at all. If you are training your dog in the house or want to take him to the dog park for training, the leash may be the right solution for you. When you are using the leash in Bark Prevention Training, you are using it as the main distracter, so that in a case where a collar might emit citronella or when someone else might be shaking a soda can of coins, you will administer a brief tug on the leash. The idea is just to get your dog's attention, not to hurt him. The tug is what interrupts the barking.

"If you take a dog which is starving and feed him and make him prosperous, that dog will not bite you. This is the primary difference between a dog and a man."

Mark Twain

In this case, you may have a dog who barks at other dogs. You might try taking him to one of the pet superstores where there are other dogs around (and preferably leashed themselves or in crates). When your dog starts to bark at another dog, first try your original "hush". If this doesn't work and the dog continues to bark, tug sharply on the leash to get his attention and repeat "hush". If he stops, wait a few seconds and then tell him "good dog" and give him a treat. (You did remember to bring the treats, didn't you?)

More Drastic Measures

Pinch Collar

A low-tech solution to the nearly un-trainable dog is the use of the the pinch-collar. These collars have been used for decades by some trainers to correct dogs who are misbehaving. When less drastic training fails, learning to use the pinch collar gives you a way of correcting your dog the way her mother might – with a sharp, small bite on the neck. Some trainers recommend training with the pinch collar and having the dog wear it all the time. In this case, when the dog barks, you tell her “hush”, and if she doesn’t stop immediately, administer a pinch by giving the collar a tug. Theoretically, by tugging the collar, this pauses the dog in the act of barking, at which time you fill in the surprised silence with “good dog”, and a treat. Like the soda can, the water spray, or the citronella blast, the pinch collar provides an interruption in the unwanted behavior. For a dog who hasn’t responded to milder interruptions, the pinch collar may be a solution.

“Dogs love their friends and bite their enemies, quite unlike people, who are capable of pure love and always have to mix love and hate.”

Sigmund Freud

That said, if you must use the pinch collar, first get yourself properly trained in its appropriate use and how to fit it on your dog. Then, remember that if you use it for bark training, it should only be used to interrupt the barking, not in any way as a punishment. There’s no denying that the pinch collar hurts your dog, and when a dog is driving you crazy, it may be difficult to restrain your irritation. If you have a temper, don’t get a device that causes pain: you may end up hurting your dog more than helping him.

Choke collars work on the same principle as pinch collars, only they press the dog’s windpipe. If you want to read about them, check out the URLs at the end of this section.

Shock Collar

The shock collar should be used as a last resort (before taking an incessantly-barking dog to the pound), if at all. Shock collars work on the punishment model, delivering an electric shock whenever the dog barks. The higher-priced models are available with various levels of voltage and can be adjusted by the owner.

Although shock collars may temporarily stop the barking, they don't address the cause behind barking, and they don't work in a way that a dog can understand. An electric jolt to the neck can hardly be considered humane, particularly when the receptor of the shock doesn't understand that it's a punishment for a behavior that cannot seem connected to the collar. Aside from the fact that they cause the dog pain and confusion, shock collars may well increase aggressive behavior as the frustrated and frightened animal lashes out. If he does manage to stop barking, he will likely take up other destructive behaviors such as tearing up the house, because now you have a dog who is angry and scared, plus whatever feeling started the barking in the first place.

Any animal, no matter how gentle, can reach a state of aggression under conditions of unexpected and unavoidable pain. I once saw the most loving, indeed, a downright wuss of a Doberman transformed into a snapping, growling and dangerous animal when he was stung by a bee just as his human was trying to shoo the bee away. The dog was too upset to understand that his friend was making an attempt of banishing his small, sharp-ended enemy. He associated the brush of the man's hand against his fur with the pain of the bee sting. He thus responded by making a solid attempt to bite the helpful man. (Fortunately, they had a good relationship based on years of trust, so once the bee was dispatched and the stinging stopped, everyone forgave each other and went back to being friends.)

Another drawback to the shock collar is that if it doesn't work right away (and it's as likely as not that it won't), the procedure is to continue raising the shock level. Companies like PetPlanet.com won't even sell shock collars, saying they are cruel, and the Denver Dumb Friends League reports that shock collars have a success rate of only around 50%.

A tiny proportion of dogs, especially dogs who have been abused, bark because of neurological problems or irreparable psychological damage. In this case, the reason for the barking is as unfathomable as the reason for a psychotic person's shouting. A psychotic dog may very well be untrainable, and one might be tempted to use the shock collar. It would take a philosopher to discuss the moral implications of using a shock collar on an insane animal versus using a shock collar on your average animal, but if reasonable use is the only thing between the dog and the pound, maybe it's worth considering. However, if the animal has any tendency to be aggressive, the shock could drive it into violence. (When a gun-dog website cautions against the use of shock collars, you've got to think twice about their helpfulness.)

For more articles on shock and choke collars, follow these URLs.
www.apbc.org.uk/article2.htm (Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors)

www.sfspca.org/behavior/dog_library/choke.pdf (San Francisco SPCA)
www.news.cornell.edu/releases/May96/bark.hrs.html
www.cambridge.news.co.uk/archives/2000/02/29/lead9.html
www.petplanet.co.uk/petplanet/news/news_archive/choke_chains.htm

Surgical Bark Removal – the Vocal Cordectomy

*“No man can be condemned for
owning a dog. As long as he has a
dog, he has a friend; and the poorer
he gets, the better friend he has.”*

Will Rogers

The cordectomy is a last resort for the incessant barker. It shouldn't be used unless you've tried and failed with training, and less drastic methods. If there is nothing else to try, and it's now surgery or the pound, you may decide to have your dog "de-barked". With the dog anaesthetized, the veterinarian removes all or part of the dog's vocal cord. There are two methods: in one, the surgeon goes in through the mouth. In the second method, the surgeon goes in through the voice box (larynx). The second method costs a bit more but is preferable because the dog's airway remains free of scar tissue. This surgery does not create a totally silent dog, but one with a modified bark that is softer and hoarser than it's original. If your dog's barking has been chronic, he may continue to bark. It may not annoy the neighbors, but you may still find it stressful. Aside from the irritation factor, the surgery doesn't stop your dog from wanting to – and trying to—bark. Whether your dog barks from anxiety, boredom, loneliness, and territoriality or because you unintentionally reinforce the barking, surgery won't solve the underlying problem. Another potential problem is that your dog may regain his bark two or three years after the surgery, or develop scar tissue that obstructs his breathing and requires additional surgery. Some vets estimate that half of dogs who undergo vocal cordectomy will have problems from the procedure.

Now that we've covered your options, you may want to use the decision tree below to choose your course of action. It is designed to move from the simplest solutions to more complex ones, and I encourage you to start with the earliest techniques, only moving up to more complicated or intrusive remedies if easier ones fail. Above all, be patient – learning takes time, and it's only fair to give your dog at least as much time to change his habits as it would for you to stop smoking or swearing or eating sweets – several weeks of consistent training –an average of ten minutes every day.

Summary of Drastic Devices

Ultrasonic Collar

Sonic Collar

Bark Free

Citronella, or Stinky Collar

Leash

Pinch Collar

Shock Collar

Surgical Bark Removal – Vocal Cordectomy

What to do with Your Barking Dog? Decision Tree

Establish why your dog is barking.

Physical Reasons for Barking

Is s/he...

Collared?

Check to make sure the collar is not too tight, too loose or rubbing your dog's neck uncomfortably (check for fur that's been rubbed away or skin irritation).

Tied up?

Does the lead give the dog room to roam?

Does the lead allow the dog freedom of movement so he can sit, stand, lie down?

Don't tie your dog up unless you have to, and always make sure he can move around comfortably and has access to shelter, food and water.

Warm or cool enough?

(Furry dogs need a cool spot in warm weather and short-hair dogs may need warmed houses, beds with blankets or even little sweaters. You may need to bring your dog inside to make him physically comfortable, or you may need a special dog-house. In hot climates, make sure your dog's paw pads don't get burned by walking him on grass instead of hot pavement. If it's too hot for your feet, it's too hot for his paws.)

Think about how physically comfortable you would be in his place, and make adjustments accordingly.

Does he have access to food and water?

"Recollect that the Almighty, who gave the dog to be companion of our pleasures and our toils, hath invested him with a nature noble and incapable of deceit."

Sir Walter Scott

Your dog should always have plenty of fresh water available, and should either have food within reach or be fed by you twice a day.

If he's outside, does he have a shelter to lie down in, in case of rain or too much sun?

Make sure he has a crate or a doghouse or a sheltered spot.

If he's inside, does he have his own spot to rest in such as a doggie bed, a chair designated by you as okay for lounging, or a crate?

Just like their humans, dogs need their own space.

Are you certain your dog is healthy? Updated on shots and heartworm prevention? No fleas, ticks, mites, injuries, illnesses, allergies, dental, skin, claw, hearing or vision problems? Is your dog aging or maturing from puppyhood?

Take your dog to the vet at least once a year and anytime you are concerned about his health. If your dog is older and the barking (or any other behavioral problem) is new, consult with your vet.

Psychological Reasons for Barking

Is s/he...

Barking at something he hears or sees?

Consider removing the dog from the noise or screening off the disturbing view with curtains or fencing.

Barking at certain people or animals?

Go directly to teaching your dog to "speak" and "hush", applying the lessons directly to the problem (i.e. use the postman's daily visit when training your dog).

Barking at certain times?

Pinpoint when your dog barks and then discover the reason behind that time. Is s/he barking at garbage trucks, kids on the way to school, neighbors going to work? Then apply the remedy for the particular situation.

Barking while you're away?

Teach "Speak" and "Hush" and practice "going away" for short periods of time while training. Reward your dog for silence when you leave the room and he stops barking.

Protecting his territory?

Consider adding fencing or hedges to screen your dog from those passing his or her "territory". Once your dog seems to be "getting it" in your basic training, practice teaching "Speak" and "Hush" where s/he currently does the most barking.

Bored?

Use training to keep your dog busy and engaged with you. Buy him toys he can play with alone, and spend time playing with him every day. If you can, get him a playmate in the form of a second dog or a cat. If you do get him a playmate, make sure and read up on how to integrate new animals into your household with minimal resistance and rivalry.

Lonely?

Pay more attention to him. Consider whether you could be taking your dog along more often when you go shopping, out with friends or possibly even to work. Use training and games to spend time together. Get him a playmate if you can. Remember, dogs' instinct runs to living in a pack, not alone. Dogs get lonely faster than people and feel it keenly.

Afraid?

Remove the dog from what he fears.

If your dog has a specific fear, you may be successful in removing the fearful stimulus from his environment. You may decide to ask delivery people to use a different door, for example. Or you may shut the dog up in another part of the house before getting out the vacuum cleaner.

Use specific training to lessen your dog's fear

Fear of machines (such as vacuum cleaners) may be addressed by gradually introducing your dog to the machine, rewarding him when he follows your command to "hush". If it's practical, you may incorporate the feared object into your training sessions. If your dog is terrified and there's no particular reason to inure him to the object of his fear, the kindest thing is to just move the dog to a place where he is not afraid.

Review of our Bark Prevention Training

Train your dog to "Speak"

Hold up a treat and say, "Speak". When your dog barks (usually he barks to encourage you to give up the treat) say "Good Dog," and give him the treat. Do this for at least ten minutes, once or twice a day until your dog

has learned to speak on your command. Over time, start phasing out the treats, so that your dog is rewarded with food once in awhile rather than every single time. Keep up the praise and the pats though –some reward is always necessary or your dog will think it doesn't matter if he complies with your commands. Using food as a reward only on occasion (and randomly), actually increases the chance that your dog will continue to listen and respond to you. Called "intermittent reinforcement", this is a powerful way of getting animals (and people) to perform consistently, in the hope that this time there will be a highly-desired but unpredictable reward. Intermittent reinforcement is not only responsible for the best-trained animals, but has caused many people to lose everything they had at the slot machines: they keep waiting for the payoff! (A negative example of intermittent reinforcement is occasionally giving pets food at the dinner table. Even if you only do it once in awhile, your dog (or cat) starts hanging around and begging, because he has learned that once in awhile, bad behavior pays off in a delightful snack.)

Train your dog to "Hush"

Once your dog has learned to "Speak", teach him to "Hush". It doesn't matter what words you use to train your dog as long as you use the word you chose for a behavior consistently. If sometimes you say "hush" and other times, "quiet", your dog may become confused and it will take longer to teach him.

Start by having him speak, then while he's barking, hold up a treat and say "Hush". It may take him awhile to get the idea, but wait until he stops barking, then say "Good Dog", giving him the treat and patting him. Do this for ten minutes, once or twice a day until your dog has learned to hush on your command. When the dog barks at other times, use "Hush" and "Good Dog" as in training. It's important to be consistent, so don't let an opportunity escape to correct your dog when he barks. After your dog consistently responds to your "hush", you may reduce the number of times you reward him with food, as long as you continue the praise and pats for good responses. If you don't have a treat on you, it's okay to just tell him "good dog" and give him pats.

Apply "Hush" to specific situations.

Pinpointing the times when your dog's barking is a problem, use those times in training. Continue your "Hush" training, only this time, instead of telling your dog to speak, start training in a situation where she already barks unnecessarily. You may want her to be quiet in the car, in the yard, or when people come to the front door. Work with her on "Hush" in the places where she usually barks too much. Have a friend come to the door over and over until your dog can easily "Hush".

Once your dog can “Speak” and “Hush” on your command, you will want to do some fine-tuning. Over time, you will probably want to phase out the food rewards, but keep the verbal rewards. Instead of cutting off the treats all at once, you may want to start reducing them, giving a treat every other time, every fifth time, until you can just use “Good Dog” as the only reward, and only give a food reward when it’s convenient for you.

What to do if training doesn’t work or if you can’t train your dog.

Hire a professional trainer: A good trainer is the best answer for people who can’t train their dogs. You should also expect that the trainer will plan to train you as well. Look for a trainer with professional credentials and a reputable background. Never hire a “trainer” who uses shock, hitting or other pain to achieve results.

Quick Review of Collars: (Collars are second-best to training, but may be used in conjunction with some training methods. In general, a collar may work while it’s on the dog, but the “training” may be reversed once it’s removed.)

Citronella collar: This is the kindest of the collar methods. When the dog barks, the collar puffs out a hit of citronella. The combination of surprise and the unpleasant lemony smell may teach the dog not to bark by interruption and negative reinforcement (i.e., the bad smell stops when the dog stops barking).

Sonic Collar: You may buy a collar that emits a tone humans and dogs can hear, and that dogs find unpleasant.

Ultrasonic Collar: This collar’s pitch is inaudible to humans but audible to dogs.

Pinch Collar: This collar “bites” the dog’s neck when you pull on the lead.

Shock Collar: This collar shocks the dog when he barks.

Other Useful Websites

www.akc.org Website of the American Kennel Club. Advice, information on specific breeds and breed standards. The AKC store also carries leashes, collars, training equipment, books, posters and more.

www.citronella-collar.com vertical portal for citronella collars.

www.hightechpet.com collars, toys, training aids: listed on the American Humane Society’s website.

www.charitywire.com Website of the American Humane Society.

www.naturapet.com natural pet foods.

www.ddfl.org Website of the Denver Humane Society. Advice for pet owners.

www.petplanet.com humane pet supplies.

www.vetinfo.com Pet advice.