



Bark! Bark! Bark! **How to Restore Peace and Quiet to Your Home**

Do you have a dog that thinks he needs to tell you every time someone passes by your house?

A certain amount of barking is normal for dogs. But if his barking is making you want to bark back or tear your hair out, you have a problem. Barking at people approaching or passing by your house is commonly referred to as "watchdog barking." Your dog is trying to alert you that there is an intruder nearby as well as scare that person away. Most of us are happy to be alerted but when Rufus keeps barking after the "intruder" is gone or barks at every person who is taking a walk on your busy street, it becomes excessive.

To begin to decrease the barking, you'll need to take a 2-part approach:

1. Management - set up the environment so your dog can't practice the incorrect behavior
2. Training - teach the behavior you want your dog to do instead

Management - Set your Dog up for Success

Remember that dogs get really good at what they practice, whether we like their behavior or not. Therefore, prevent your dog from barking at passersby out the window by not allowing access to the windows facing the street unless you are in the room and are doing the training exercises. You can do this by simply closing the curtains/blinds, blocking his access to the window, or preventing him from going into those rooms for now. Use baby gates to prevent access to those rooms or only allow your dog in other areas of the house where he does not see or hear people and dogs passing by.

Some dogs will still bark if they hear people outside near your home even if they can't see them. In that case, turn on a radio, TV or white noise maker like a fan to block out those sounds.

Training - Teach the Behavior You Want

When you are home, you can work on training the behaviors you prefer. There are several options, depending on what your goal is and how much effort you're willing to put into the training. Extinguishing the barking completely is not a goal you'll likely attain. Dogs have an innate need to warn the family of a threat and to attempt to make that threat go away. However, you can reduce the intensity and length of their warning to something you can more easily tolerate.

First, decide on how many warning barks are ok -- 3-4 should suffice. Have some really good treats ready for your training session (choose something better than everyday treats such as chicken, cheese, hot dogs, peanut butter, etc.). Take your dog into the room where he tends to bark at people out the window. As soon as he has barked the allotted 3-4 times at the passerby, say "thank you!" show a treat and wait for 3-5 seconds of quiet. Then give him the treat for being quiet. Saying "thank you" is a great

way of telling your dog you appreciate his warning and will also help you to keep your cool (it's hard to say "thank you" in an angry tone!). It will also become a predictor of a yummy reward.

When you give the treat to your dog, try to give it to him in the middle of the room away from the window. That way, you're also encouraging him to leave his post and come to you which is more rewarding.

Some dogs are very smart and catch on to this pattern very quickly. Some are too smart and learn the pattern -- bark, bark, bark then go to you for a treat -- even if there's nothing to bark at! If that's the case, try to mix things up a bit to break the pattern: wait for a longer period of quiet before giving the treat or ask for any behavior the dog knows (sit, down, watch, touch, etc.) before giving the treat.

If you have multiple dogs in your home, you'll need to practice this with each one separately. The dogs tend to feed off of each other's arousal so make sure they are each doing well with the training individually before working on the training with them together.

While this may take some time to accomplish, especially if your dog is a dedicated watchdog barker, with consistency and daily training, you should begin to have a quieter household and fewer headaches.