



Eliminating Demand Barking Teaching Your Dog to be Polite

Does your dog bark at you to get you play, give her attention, when she's hungry, when she's bored or just to tell you you're preparing dinner too slowly? If so, she is demonstrating demand or attention seeking barking. This is the most common inappropriate barking that I see in my practice.

As you know, dogs are very smart creatures and do more of what has worked for them in the past. If barking at you got you to respond, they are going to continue to do so. Remember that attention to a dog is looking at, talking to, touching them or providing whatever it is they are wanting. If your dog barks when he wants out of the crate and you open the door, he learned that barking makes you open the door. If he barks in order to get you to throw a ball, he learned barking makes you play fetch. Most people find being barked at to be annoying and end up giving the dog what he wants in order to make him be quiet. What has the dog learned? Being persistent in barking at you makes you do what he wants! Smart pup! So, how do you remedy this and bring peace and quiet back to your home? Implement this simple rule:

Barking dogs get nothing. Quiet dogs get what they want.

Let's look at a couple of examples to see how this works.

1. Your dog barks when she wants out of the crate. Instead of opening the door, you'll wait for a few seconds of quiet (without asking her to be quiet, banging on the crate or any other types of attention). If you have been opening the crate door when she barks, it can take some time for her to offer a few seconds of quiet – 5-10 seconds is enough in the beginning. When she is quiet, calmly tell her she's a good girl and open the crate. In order to reverse this barking habit, you will have to be consistent and only open the door when she is quiet.
2. Your dog barks when he wants you to throw his ball. Instead of throwing the ball, you'll wait for a short period of quiet and then throw it. If he just dances around you barking, walk away and go in the house or to another room. When he is quiet, come back and throw the ball. Quiet dogs get to play fetch. Barking dogs lose the opportunity to play.
3. Your dog barks at you when you prepare his food. If your dog barks at you when you prepare his food to try to get you to hurry up, you'll do the opposite. Put the food away (out of reach) and walk out of the room. When he is quiet, return and continue preparing the food. It won't take long for him to learn quiet dogs get fed much more quickly.

While this retraining sounds simple, there is often what is called an extinction burst (the behavior gets worse before getting better) so stick to your plan! Before long you'll change your pushy pooch into a polite pup.