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## Territorial Barking

Barking is a natural behavior for dogs but it can be very annoying for us humans. I have had this issue in my own house and have tried multiple techniques published by other trainers and behaviorists with mixed results. I have developed my own techniques by drawing ideas from these other methods and have successfully used my method on my own dog and on client's dogs. My technique works for barking at the door when the bell rings, barking at the window, or barking at the fence. It can be modified depending on how much training your dog has. The more training your dog has, the easier it will be to extinguish the barking behavior. For rapid success you must be 100% consistent, so you can't sometimes allow them to bark out of control and sometimes not. I am okay with my dogs giving me an alarm bark but then it is my job to investigate it, and for them to stop barking.

**Step One.** This is where you start if your dog runs and barks when the door bell rings. If your issue is barking at the window or barking at the fence, go directly to step two. First we need to teach them that the door bell no longer means someone is at the door. For a couple of weeks, have your dog on leash and have a family member or friend sneak outside through the garage or another door besides the front door, and quietly come up to the door, ring the bell, and then leave. Tell your dog to sit while you open the door -- there will be no one there. Repeat this over and over so your dog learns that the door bell does not always bring visitors so there's no reason to bark anymore. What we are doing is desensitizing the dog to the door bell. If your dog does not respond well to the desensitizing method above, you can try the "find it" game at the door. When the door bell rings, drop one treat at a time on the floor and say "find it." It is very hard to eat and bark at the same time. We are doing classical Pavlov training. The door bell brings treats. Do not go to step two until 90% of the time there is no barking or the barking is at a lower intensity when the door bell rings.

**Step Two.** Practice recalls (coming when called) away from the door, window or fence with no distractions. If you are working on doorbell barking, don't ring the door bell. Make it really fun. Call them and give them food rewards and play with them, have them do tricks, or a few obedience commands for treats. We are teaching them to come off the areas that trigger the barking. Do this 5-10 times twice a day for a couple of weeks if you can. Do not go to step three until you have 90% success in getting a good recall away from the door, window or fence.

**Step Three.** Call your dog again but this time have a target mat near you when you call (a target mat can be a bed, a blanket, a towel – anything they can sense as a specific place to go to). When they come to your call, have them do a down/stay on the target while you walk away. Try to build distance and duration to the stay. Tell them to stay while you go all the way to the window or door. Reward your dog for success. If your dog does not have a good down stay, call them to a tie down (a 4-6 foot leash attached to a piece of furniture), a crate, or to another room where you have a gate up and you toss some treats into the room and close the gate. Have a cue, “go to your mat”, “go to your crate,” or “go to your room.” Toss some treats to show them it is rewarding to go to their “area.” If you are using the room method, I like to spray the treats around the room to keep them busy, and hunting for treats is a fun game for them. Don’t go to step four until successful 90% of the time.

**Step Four.** Bring this all together. Your dog barks, you call them, tell them to go to their mat or area, and tell them to stay. At this stage I’d add a chew or stuffed Kong toy when they get to their target area so they don’t just rush right back to the door, window or fence. If you do this consistently you will no longer need to redirect with a chew or Kong. Have your dog drag a leash and if they don’t come to you after the second call, go get them. Often now my dog, Lizzie, will bark at the window a couple of times and then she comes to me which I think is really cool. Again, don’t proceed to Step Five until 90% successful.

**Step Five.** At this stage you do need to add consequences if they don’t do what they are told. Lizzie likes to be on patrol. She looks out the window to watch for dogs being walked down the street. If she barks aggressively, I call her off the window and tell her down/stay for about 1-3 minutes and then I release her. She is allowed to go back to the window but if she barks again, I give her the cue “too bad”, and I go get her and *calmly* take her to a tie down (see above for definition). What this teaches her is that she has lost her privilege of being able to look out the window. She stays in the tie down where I completely ignore her for about 15 minutes. When I release her, if she barks again, I put her back in the tie down, and close the blind. We have a dog door and she does her patrol thing outside. If she sees something and barks, I call her inside and put her in a down/stay for 1-3 minutes so she can calm herself down. I then release her where she is free to go back outside. If she barks again, I go get her and say the “too bad” cue and close the dog door.

You may have noticed I haven’t suggested using the “quiet” command. I find this useful and do use the quiet command when the barking is at low intensity. I have learned with my own dogs, if the barking is at a high intensity you can’t just say quiet and allow them to continue to keep looking at the thing that is triggering the barking. Calling them away gives them time to calm down. If the barking is at low intensity, I will tell Lizzie “quiet” and if she doesn’t quiet down, I then call her away. By doing this she has learned how to hang out by the window and give a few half hearted woofs when dogs go by. She now knows if she barks too loudly or doesn’t quiet down, she loses her “patrol” privilege which she really enjoys. To make it easy on me, I have trained a tap on the window

means quiet when she is outside. This way I don't have to open a door or window to give her the quiet cue.

Dogs often patrol because it gives them something to do. By providing other outlets, especially exercise, it will often resolve the problem. If your dog is extremely nervous and barks at every little noise and can't calm down with the above method, see a trainer who has experience with fearful dogs. If your dog shows any aggression like barking, growling and or lunging once a guest comes through your door, see a trainer who specializes in aggression to prevent it from escalating to dog bite. If your dog is barking when you are not home, you will have to manage it so they can't have access to the window, door or yard, or use a bark collar. Management is much more humane than a bark collar.

Here is a cute story to show how well this works and show smart dogs are. We have a deck right outside my office. The other day Lizzie heard a dog bark and barked back and immediately looked at me through the window. I gave a tap on the window. She then barked again, but this time a little softer and then looked at me again. I again, tapped on the window. She then barked even softer, and I gave her the thumbs up signal. She was trying to get information just how loud she can bark.

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