

Barking Attention seeking

Barking is the primary means of communication for a dog. They can bark for a variety of reasons, including protection of territory, alerting other pack members to potential dangers or intruders, defence, solitude, anxiety or excitement.

The barking dog offers a good means of deterrent to would be intruders, but constant 'yapping' can also become a very irritable and annoying sound as well. To remedy this we have to find the button that will turn the barking on & off.

Introduction

If you had never seen a light switch before, and someone asked you to turn the light off, how could you?

If you hadn't driven or seen a car before and someone asked you to turn the engine off, how could you?

If someone had never shown you how to bark, and suddenly shouted "Quiet!", how could you?

*For the dog that doesn't comprehend the word used to cease barking, can learn that the ever escalating quiet, **quiet, quiet, quiet QUIET!..** is approval from the owners, because you are joining in the commotion?*

Teaching the dog the action of barking, and rewarding the behaviour, allows you to teach the alternative behaviour, and eventual response of *quiet* at a later stage.

The action of barking should be taught away from the problem situation, to avoid further reinforcement.

Stage one

Have a friend hold your dog on a collar and leash, or restrict the dog's movement by attaching his lead to a secure point. Stand just out of reach of your dog, with an article your dog values, such as his favourite toy. Your dog will vocalize through frustration. A whine or 'yap' is your initial criteria to be indicated for reward and slowly increased until a bark is achieved. Reward, is a piece of dried liver or meaty strip or play with the toy. Do not exceed a period of 5 /10 minutes practice.

Once a reliable barking response is achieved with the presentation of the toy, add the 'cue' such as "**speak**". Develop the speak response in a variety of situations and environments, with and without restriction. A random reward schedule will strengthen the response over a period.

Stage two

Request the dog to speak. Present the toy. In anticipation of the reward the dog will cease barking. Add the cue " **quiet**", with an appropriate hand signal to assist the dogs understanding, and present the reward. Develop the "quiet" command as you did the "speak" in all situations. The final stage of development is to proof the response in the original area the problem occurred. In order to assist with timing, set-up situations, using stooge assistants maybe necessary.

- Progress at the dog's rate of learning
- 5 /10 minutes at a time
- Any regression may require repeating steps
- Do not use the turn-off command in any area that hasn't been previously proofed, because the dog is sure to ignore the request.

At a later date the command speak can be associated to another stimulus, to build into a useful response such as alerting when the smoke alarm triggers, or when the car alarm is set off.