

# Barking

Barking should be discouraged in puppyhood. This behavior often becomes apparent when the graduate returns home with the dog. While the dogs are in the kennel they don't have a home environment of which to become protective. Many times dogs respond to a quick movement. For example, a knock on the door and sudden movement by the handler will often arouse the dog's sense of excitement and cause them to bark. A SLOWER response by the handler, taking a few SLOW steps toward the door, will help keep the dog calm. Handlers can inadvertently teach the dog to respond to quick, sudden movements.



## Types of barking problems:

**Protective Instinct:** The dog growls when someone knocks on the door, enters a room or an office space. The dog is being protective of the person or space around him. This should be discouraged in puppyhood.

**Alert Barking:** The dog reacts to a noise, garbage man, mailman, animal outside at nighttime, etc. This often starts as a "puff" and is often followed by more intense barking. Correct the "puff" before it escalates.

**Play Barking:** This is a different type of barking and while it should be discouraged it requires a different line of correction, one that is not oppressive. Some play barking in young puppies will occur but it should be controlled.

## Correction for barking:

This is referred to as the ladder of correction. Start at the bottom with the least amount of correction needed and work up towards firmer corrections if needed.

*Start with a verbal correction; "no", "quiet", etc. in a firm but calm voice. Come across as the alpha leader by lowering the tone of voice when you say "no". When the barking stops, praise but in a calm way so that you don't bring up the excitement level.*

*Reinforce in a productive way, if needed, with a muzzle squeeze for younger pups. For older dogs, a pop on the leash, scruff shake, make eye contact while grabbing the jowls or put the dog in a down on the floor, are all ways to dominate the dog without hurting him.*

*Obedience exercises can be done after the correction to take the dog's mind off of what it is that got them excited and to discourage further barking. A simple sit, down and sit, come and sit, etc. are good exercises to do to encourage the dog to refocus on you. Once the dog is settled, a down, followed by calm "good boy" praise and a rest command could be another exercise performed. Remember to use your leash for extra control!*

You may also teach "Go to your place" when someone is at the door.

Barking must always be discouraged at an early age before it becomes an ingrained behavior. One would think that a blind person would like this behavior, but it is actually quite detrimental to the dog's success as a guide. Barking at the door of a condominium or apartment where pets are not allowed, but working dogs are, gives the apartment management fuel for eviction. If the behavior transfers to the blind person's place of employment they may be asked to leave their dog at home or lose their job. Curtailing barking at the door or at passersby must be worked on early in puppyhood so that this type of behavior does not eliminate the dog from training or cause the dog to be returned by the blind person once it has graduated.

Please call Vicki if you are having trouble with barking or have any questions on the subject.