

Dog: Quiet Command



Benefit

Dogs bark for a number of reasons: people walking by, other dogs, boredom, frustration, and loneliness, for example. Some types of barking can be redirected and controlled with the quiet command. Other types require behavior modification through a customized training program. To learn more, read about barking on our website or contact us.

What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken or cheese, or a favorite toy.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say “yes!” to mark the behavior.
- A leash.
- A watch with a second hand.
- 5–10 minutes twice daily to practice in.

How to Train It

Step 1: Set up a practice time when you know your dog will bark, like when the mailman comes or when people are coming and going around your house.

Step 2: Before starting, clip on your dog’s leash (and Gentle Leader if necessary) and go to the area where your dog usually barks. If your dog runs to the front door when he hears people outside, start at the front door.

Step 3: When your dog barks, wait for the barking to calm down slightly (usually about 10 seconds). The instant your dog pauses, place a tasty treat (cheese, hotdogs, liver snacks) directly in front of his nose and say “quiet.”

You are encouraging your dog to be quiet by coupling two incompatible behaviors—it’s difficult for a dog to bark while sniffing and eating! Give a few more treats while he is quiet.

Step 4: Remove the treats and ignore your dog. When he begins to bark again, wait for another break, then place a tasty treat directly in front of his nose and say “quiet.”

Step 5: Over time, gradually increase the length of time your dog has to wait before getting the treat. An example of progression would be:

- A. Say “quiet” with treat in front of nose, give treat immediately.
- B. Say “quiet” with treat in hand but in direct sight of your dog.
- C. Say “quiet” with treat in hand but with treat not visible.
- D. Say “quiet” with treat in hand, wait one second before giving treat (if your dog stays quiet).

Repeat D, gradually increasing the length of time before your dog gets the treat.

Step 6. After a few training sessions, you may notice your dog stops barking and looks to you for a treat. At this point you can start saying the command *before* your dog stops barking.

How to Crate Train Your Dog *(continued)*

Step 7. Be conscious of how long it takes for your dog to stop barking and look for the treat. Example: your dog barks at a passer-by for 15 seconds before he looks to you for a treat. In this case, start off saying “quiet” at 13 seconds. If your dog obeys, he gets a big reward. If he doesn’t, you need to go back to the beginning so he learns the word “quiet.”

Step 8. Over time, start interrupting the barking sooner. Stay at each level for 10–20 trials and keep the sessions to 5–10 minutes. If you have time, you can proceed with multiple sessions in one day. Also start sitting farther away from your dog, so he has to come to you to get the treat.

Step 9. Gradually increase the length of time your dog has to wait before getting the treat:

- A. Say “quiet” with treat in front of nose, give treat immediately.
- B. Say “quiet” with treat in hand, but in direct sight of your dog.
- C. Say “quiet” with treat in hand but with the treat not visible.
- D. Say “quiet” with treat in hand, wait one second before giving treat (if your dog stays quiet)

Repeat D, gradually increasing the length of time before your dog gets the treat.

Step 10. Once your dog responds to the verbal command and his barking doesn’t last as long, you can move away from him during training sessions:

- A. Sit or stand a few feet away from your dog. When he barks, give the command with a treat in your hand, extended out to your dog. Your dog will have to leave his spot to come to you for his reward.
- B. Repeat this step 10–20 times at the same distance.
- C. Gradually move farther away from your dog, allowing him to bark but then giving the “quiet” command and offering the treat to him so he can see it.

Step 11: Now stand or sit across the room from your dog, without any treats visible, and allow your dog to bark and then give the “quiet” command.

- A. Have your dog come to you, and then treat him.
- B. Gradually lengthen the time between when your dog gets to you and giving the treat.

Step 12: Now you can start using the same protocol when you are out of the room. When you say “quiet,” your dog should immediately come looking for his reward.

Tips & Pitfalls

- Have your dog on a leash so you can control what he’s rewarded for. If he runs towards the thing that makes him bark, he’s rewarding his own behavior. If he’s on leash, he can’t.
- With extensive barking, you may need to start in another room to be able to find a barking pause to work with. If the habit is too strong, it can take a long time before the dog pauses.
- Each barking trigger is different. Your dog may bark less when the neighbor comes home, but go out of control when he hears the UPS truck. Pay attention to the different sounds your dog reacts to and adjust your training sessions accordingly.
- Proceed only when your dog reliably responds to the quiet command. If he stops responding, go back to the previous step for another 10–20 trials before moving on.