

Dog: Barking at the Front Door – Greeting



Benefit

You can control nuisance barking at the door by teaching your dog the following sequence when the doorbell rings: 1) Bark at the door; 2) Go to a designated spot; 3) Do a down-stay in that spot; 4) You let your guests in the house while your dog stays in his spot; 5) Under your supervision, the guests meet your dog.

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 comfortable dog bed within eyesight of the door.
- An X-pen or gate to help keep your dog at a reasonable distance.
- 5 minutes 2–3 times daily.

Prerequisite

Your dog needs to know down-stay. You also need to practice the exercises from the mat/relaxation handout with him.

How to Train It

Step 1. Warm up with the mat/relaxation exercises. Then move on to step 2.

Step 2. With your dog staying on his spot:

A. Weeks 1 and 2: Walk toward the door, return, and treat. Next, walk to the door, rattle the knob, return, and treat.

B. Weeks 3 and 4: Walk to the door, open it, close it, return, and treat. Next, open the door, greet an imaginary guest, return, and treat.

Step 3. When your dog can easily stay on his bed for that sequence then you are ready to add some people. Start with very familiar people (family members are best), have someone ring the doorbell, send your dog to his spot, ask him to down-stay, open the door, let the guest in, and have the guest give your dog attention for staying on the dog bed.

If your dog has a hard time going to or staying on the bed when the bell rings, work with him on the bell first. Have a family member or neighbor ring the doorbell, send your dog to the bed, give an extra delicious treat, and release him. Don't open the door or let anyone in. Repeat until your dog starts to associate the doorbell with treats on the bed, not visitors.

Step 4. In week 6 or 7, add more people. Again start with people your dog is less likely to react to and work up to more exciting people. You may need to have an extra helper/trainer at first who stays with your dog or use a physical barrier such as an X-pen or baby gate to remind him to stay. Always reward the dog for calm behavior and staying on its spot until released to greet.

Tips

- Practice each step for 10–20 trials or until your dog is responding reliably.
- End each session on a positive note with your dog not barking.
- Don't go too fast. Your dog needs time to understand what is asked of him.