

Dog: Barking at the Front Door – Quiet Command



Benefit

The idea behind this exercise is to allow your dog to bark when there is someone at the door, but for him to be quiet when told. Keep in mind that barking is normal canine behavior. It's one of the ways dogs communicate not only with each other but with us. Excessive barking, on the other hand, is unwanted and this command can help you keep it under control. The goal is to reward quiet behavior.

Note: If you have more than one dog, work with each dog individually until the behavior is under control.

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.
- Collar or Head halter and a leash.
- A helper to assist with the exercise.
- Two watches with second hands (one for you and your helper).
- 5 minutes 2–3 times daily.

How to Train It

Step 1. Start with your dog on leash standing next to the door on the inside and your helper on the outside of the door. Have your helper knock or ring the doorbell. Don't correct your dog, tug on the leash, or make any eye contact.

Step 2. Place a tasty treat in your left hand and make a fist (this will become the hand signal for the quiet command). When your dog barks, place your fist with the treat inside directly next to his nose and wait for the barking to stop; your dog will sniff your fist with the tasty treat inside and will stop barking, because he will have to close his mouth to smell the treat. You're not encouraging barking; you're encouraging quiet behavior by combining two incompatible behaviors. Your dog can't bark and smell and eat at the same time. When the barking stops immediately “click” or say “Yes” to mark the quiet behavior and give the dog the treat from your fist.

Tip: If your dog is not interested in the treat in your hand, you need to use a better smelling treat or create more distance from the front door, i.e. practice in the bedroom first.

Step 3. After several repetitions of step 2, and once your dog responds to the fist next to his nose and calms down, then you are ready to introduce the “quiet” command. You will say “quiet”, place the fist with the treat in front, he quiets and you “click” and treat.

Step 4. After several repetitions of the steps above, you will not need to have the treat in your hand any more. You will then use the word “quiet” with the fist as the hand signal, and then click and give the treat when he becomes quiet. Over time, gradually increase the length of time that your dog must wait before receiving the treat.

Step 5. Once you can interrupt the barking easily, try the above steps without the leash. Move slightly away from your dog and have him come to you for the treat.

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1. Say 'quiet' with treat in closed fist in front of nose, click immediately when quiet and give treat – repeat 10-20 sessions.
2. Say 'quiet' with treat in closed fist hand in direct sight of your dog, click immediately when quiet and give treat – repeat 10-20 sessions.
3. Say 'quiet' with hand signal but no treat in the fist and click and treat with other hand when quiet.
4. Say 'quiet' with hand signal and click but wait one second before giving treat (if your dog stays quiet, if not repeat step #1).
5. Repeat #4, with gradually increasing length of time and distance before your dog receives the treat. Your dog will then have to come to you in order to get the treat.

Repeat the exercise. You can set it up in the beginning that when your dog isn't barking, your helper rings the bell after 10 seconds. That way, you don't need to talk to your helper during the sessions, possibly confusing your dog.

Step 6. Next, when your dog reliably comes to you when you say "quiet" in the same room, move to another room. This way, you're training your dog to briefly communicate that someone is at the door and then come find you.

Tips

- Practice each step for 10–20 trials or until your dog is responding reliably.
- End each session on a positive note (i.e. on a success with your dog not barking).
- Don't go too fast. Your dog needs time to understand what is asked of him.
- Keep sessions short and positive. Four 3-minute sessions is preferable to one 20-minute session.
- Don't offer any attention to your dogs barking until he is quiet and you "click" and give the treat.