

Jumping and Barking

Basic Canine Education



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Training a pet takes time, understanding, patience and consistency. Here are a few of the more common training challenges dog owners face, and some suggestions for working with them.

How training works

Dogs are pack animals, and as such are only comfortable when their role within the pack has been established. An established role allows the dog to predict the reactions and needs of the rest of his pack. Without a confirmed, consistent role, the dog never knows when punishment or rewards will occur, and will spend most of the time anxious and worried.

Basic obedience helps to establish the owner in role of pack leader, and lays down clear behavior guidelines that the pack can follow. The lack of a clear pack leader will cause anxiety, since only a strong and definite pack leader can protect the pack and provide it with whatever is needed. If none of the humans take this role, the dog is forced to attempt to assume it himself, since the pack **must** have a leader. The pack leader controls where the pack goes, when and what the pack eats and how the pack behaves toward one another. Having these clear guidelines allows the dog to relax, since he knows what behaviors earn what types of attention.

Most trainers follow the 3-second rule in training. Dogs will attribute positive or negative attention to whatever was happening within the 3 seconds immediately before the attention was given. Be careful to only give your dog attention when appropriate, when current behavior, not past, deserves it. If your dog is growling at strangers, don't reward the behavior by attempting to calm him. This merely reinforces that there must be something scary happening. Instead, a gentle "no", and a friendly greeting of the stranger on your part will be more reassuring to the dog than your calming attempts.

Jumping up on people

While that puppy may be absolutely darling as it hops up and down on your leg, trying to get your attention, the same behavior in the 70-pound adult could not only be scary, but downright dangerous to small children and frail adults. Habits developed in puppyhood can be difficult to correct. Start young, and don't allow the puppy to jump up on you.

Jumping up on you is a perfectly natural behavior, stemming from the dog's desire to sniff your breath and lick your face in greeting and submission. Because this is a natural and instinctive reaction, it is best to replace it with another behavior, rather than simply try to stop it all together.

Try teaching your dog to sit when greeted. "Sit" works well because if he's sitting, he can't jump! Follow through. If you can't enforce the sit, don't ask for it. He knows when he can ignore you. Keep treats handy while he's learning, to reward correct responses. Teach him to sit any time and any place you ask him to, not just at the front door.

Try folding your arms across your chest and don't look at the dog; turn away from him, ignore him, and walk away. If walking away just revs him up more, stand your ground and wait until he quits jumping (eventually!). Then praise him. Don't touch your dog or look him in the eyes, because he'll jump right back up.

A quick squirt in the mouth from a water bottle will surprise your dog and interrupt his jump. You may want to add a tablespoon of vinegar to make it more unpleasant. Aim for his mouth, not his eyes. Praise him ("Good off!") when he quits jumping.

Another correction for jumping is to grab his front paws and hold them while pinching his toes. He will be uncomfortable and struggle to get down. Be sure not to look him in the eyes or talk to him: both are rewards for jumping up. Tell him "Off" and release him. Praise him when he has four feet on the floor. Say "Off" (as in "get off of me") instead of "Down" (meaning "lay down") so you won't confuse him.

Practice in different places and with lots of different people. Have your dog on a leash so you can enforce your commands. Teach him to sit-to-greet in many social situations. Practice asking him to sit-to-greet while you are in a chair, while you are laying down, in the backyard, at the park, etc.

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Excessive Barking Barking is so self-rewarding that your dog can easily slip into the habit. Owners often accidentally train their dogs to bark, by rewarding the dog with attention (even negative attention) when he is barking.

Figure out why and when your dog barks. If your fence is see-through he may react to every person, car or bird going by and runs the fence line barking. He thinks he has successfully chased them away! All that stimulation with no interaction causes frustration and result in more barking. A solid fence that blocks his view may cut the noise somewhat, but a better solution might be to bring the dog inside or build a separate dog run away from the action.

A similar scenario happens when someone comes to your front door. The visitor leaves, and the dog believes he has successfully chased him away. To stop this, recruit a friend to come to the door repeatedly. Praise the dog for barking a warning then take over, asserting your pack leader role in his eyes. Keep a leash by the front door, and ask him to sit while you open the door. Usually by third try, the dog starts to understand, and sits much more quickly. Make it a game, rewarding him with a treat before he gets up.

Does your dog bark at you? When he was a puppy you may have teased him with a toy, and thrown it for him when he started barking at you. You've trained him to get what he wants by barking! He can recognize from your body language that you are fixing dinner (or leaving the house, or getting ready for a walk). Desensitize him to those actions. Go through all the motions of fixing his food, and then walk away without giving it to him. Don't return to feed him until he stops barking. Use similar methods to reduce or end barking at other activities, such as going for a walk, leaving for work, etc. Make sure not to reward his barking, especially by yelling at him. That's just barking back to him as far as your dog is concerned.

If the dog barks while you are at work try leaving him indoors in a crate while you are gone. He will learn to relax and go to sleep instead of feeling like he has to protect his territory. Once reliable indoors (meaning he is housetrained and won't chew from anxiety) you can leave him in one room or loose in the house. Leave the TV or radio on, or even a recording of your voice, to comfort him and mask outside noises. Close the curtains to block his view.

Have an exercise session before you leave, and leave him with a wonderful chew bone or toy to occupy him while you are gone. Start by leaving for short periods, gradually lengthening them as he gets used to being alone.

Other solutions

Citronella or battery controlled anti-barking collars work well with some dogs. Citronella squirts the dog with a strongly scented, sour flavored juice. Battery operated collars give the dog a correction or emit an ultrasonic sound that hurts his ears. Don't just put the collar on him and leave the first time you use it. Make sure the dog understands where the correction is coming from and how to make it stop before you leave the dog alone.

Sources *How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With* by Clarice Rutherford & David H. Neil
Choosing a Dog for Life by Andrew De Prisco, et al
Dog Training in 10 Minutes by Carol Lea Benjamin

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.