

Clicker Training Checklist

by: Lianna B. Jones

4:00 A.M

You squint your eyes as you try to make out the numbers on the alarm clock sitting on your nightstand. You rub your sleep-deprived eyes as you struggle to the floor to find your house shoes.

"Honey," you say in a deep growl, "It's that neighbor dog across the street. This is the third night in a row!" You find a shoe under the bed, and are now groping around in the dark for the other one.

"Ugh..." your wife groans, "Harold, just go back to bed..."

"No!" you say, "I'm going to shoot that dog right now!"

Right then, while your hand is stuck under the bed probing for the lost house shoe, the phone rings.

"Hello?" your wife's slumber broken voice says.

"Will you shut your dog up?" says a furious voice on the other end. "That blasted animal has kept me up all night! Don't you know I have an important meeting tomorrow?"

"Uh," stammered your wife, "I thought it was your dog..."

"My dog!" yelled the angry neighbor. "My dog has been at the vet for three days!"

You finally find your other shoe and struggle off your knees, onto your feet. Peering out the window, you can see your neighbor across the street in his window, waving and pointing to something that looks remarkably like a shotgun.

You also notice Burt, your dog, on his chain in the front yard, barking wildly at a raccoon caught up in the old oak tree...

Fix The Problem

For me, the best way to teach my dog not to bark is teaching it to bark. Now, I know this sounds like a self contradiction, but think about it this way. If you (the owner, and pack leader) teach the dog to speak on command, then in a short while, the dog will only bark when you say so, thus remaining quiet when it hasn't been given the command.

Sometimes this works, and sometimes it doesn't. Another method is to reward your dog whenever he is being quiet. For instance, if your dog is in another room of the house in his pen, he will naturally whine and cry for you to let him out. The most important thing here is this: Never let the dog's crying affect you so that you will "give in" and let the dog get what he wants. Now, when the dog settles down, then click and reward him. Pretty soon, the dog will know that barking isn't what gets him what he wants, being quiet does. You have to be careful when using this method so you won't accidentally train your dog to bark and then be quiet, hoping for a treat!

There are other ways of making your dog stop barking, including shock collars or other non-barking collars. These are sometimes effective, but can ruin the dog's confidence and psychotic sense. I would try the above methods first before you resort to any type of electroshock or acid method. If the dog has a "special" problem with barking, it is possible to surgically "de-bark" the dog, but this is for very rare cases.

As in all types of "bad" behavior, a dog that has a problem with barking wasn't "born that way," or is "stuck with it." The dog has the problem as a result from poor training. A dog can't be let free to do whatever it wants, and still be expected to behave properly.