



Barking Dog? How to train quiet & speak on cue

It can be very useful to train a dog to be quiet, but at the same time it can also be useful to train them when to bark or guard. Dogs don't need to bark at everyone that goes past your house, but it can help if someone comes down your driveway toward your house, door or gate. Or maybe if you hear someone outside your home at night.

Teaching a dog to be quiet is relatively simple, however if your dog is having a lot of practice while unsupervised it will make it a lot harder for you. Keeping your dog entertained while you are out is critical to reduce excessive barking, especially in the first 30 minutes of you leaving the house (but that's another article, or come along to our keeping your dog entertained seminar which runs quite regularly at Oakford).

The first step to training quiet is to label the behaviour you like. This means to find opportunities when your dog is quiet and say the word 'quiet' followed by rewarding the dog. The next step is to find times where it may be a little bit more difficult for your dog to be quiet, for example someone maybe walking up towards your house. If you can catch it early enough, you can say to your dog 'quiet', good dog! The simple act of talking to them should distract them enough to stop and listen to you before barking. If this isn't possible, have a treat or item in a closed hand. Present your hand toward the dog and when they sniff at your hand they will go quiet – now label the behaviour with your cue 'quiet' and praise them verbally before rewarding them with that treat. If they are unable to settle & respond then they are too overwhelmed (and not in a learning state of mind). This means they need more distance or a calmer situation for training. Although the quiet cue works well when you hold a treat in your hand (for them to stop and sniff) its best that you mix it up so you can label behaviour when it occurs. And find times to praise your dog for being quiet, & then bring out a reward (or praise along with a scratch on the chest).

Repetition is important when training quiet (& speak) as you will need to train your dog over multiple occasions and in different circumstances. Allow time for this! It's also important to train quiet, before you train speak (or at the very least, concentrate on quiet more than you concentrate on speak).

The same principle applies when teaching your dog to speak or bark on command - Find a situation that is appropriate for your dog to bark & 'capture' the behaviour. Label it with a word such as the word speak, guard or bark (& reward your dog). Remember that some dogs need very little encouragement and the main thing is to teach them to associate the word with what they are doing. For dogs that need little encouragement spend more time on the quiet cue. When training 'speak' also think about what environment you are training in – an appropriate situation to train is when someone approaches your house. It is not appropriate to train the word 'speak' when a dog is barking inappropriately (and that includes barking at friends, neighbours, other animals etc) that's when you train quiet!

It can take some time to teach the dog to associate the words you are using as a cue to what they are doing. Take your time to train this and use opportunities that arise as a training exercise.

By Sarah of Clever Creatures. For more information go to www.clevercreatures.com.au