

PETS

CANINE CONVERSATIONS

Whether we like it or not, the animal that we cohabitate with can sometimes be annoying when they won't shut up, and so can our dogs

Barking is one of the behaviors that we wish we could switch off, sadly we can't. Dogs bark when they are startled, when they want to play, when something intrigues them and to scare off intruders. Barking is also one of the key things that separate our dogs from their ancestors, the wolf. Wolves don't bark and one of the reasons we ascribe to that is that dogs are genetically "immature wolves."

Clients will hire me to "teach their dogs to stop barking." My response to these calls is often the same: "It's nearly impossible to do this." That is to say, there is no magic wand; it's a training that takes a very long time to remedy. I wrote an article about Bark Busting that gave good advice. This works if you're able to dedicate a lot of time and work to your dog. For example we know that dogs bark out of boredom and frustration, so giving your dogs exercise and things to keep them occupied may prevent barking. Furthermore, barking can lead to more destructive behaviors; so nipping barking in the bud early may help prevent bigger problems. Some steps you can take to curb barking are simple.

1. Be sure your dog has exercise daily especially before you leave him alone.
2. If your dog is going to be alone leave him toys as well as chew treats such as a Kong stuffed with food to occupy his time.
3. If possible have someone check in or even walk your dog if possible.

If your dog barks in spite of these things you may have a dog that needs a bit more help. Sadly people will often give up on their dogs before taking it to the next step. People dump dogs in shelters and think someone else will want them. However, if you don't want your dog, chances are no one else will want him either. Shelters kill thousands of "good dogs" with no behavioral issues – dogs with issues have nearly no chance of being saved, so please think about this before giving up on your best friend.

Using an electronic collar to stop a dog from barking is often the best choice, but let me be clear, I don't mean remote controlled collars; I mean "electronic bark limiters." The difference is simple; remote collars require you to push the button to correct the dog. The problem with these is that when you don't push the button the dog continues barking and the dog "learns" to bark at certain times. Bark limiters are computer controlled collars that learn the dogs barking patterns and control them. They start out with very slight stimulation and adjust themselves automatically to accommodate your dog's barking. That means they turn themselves up and down to control and teach your dog not to bark.

Some people may opt for citronella type collars, and when they work they're great. However for serious barkers I'd recommend an electronic collar.

There are times when I use electronic bark collars on my personal dogs. Both of my dogs are protection /obedience trained. Even still, there are times when I want them to bark, but there are times when I don't. By using a bark limiter I am able to teach my dog when I don't want them to bark (usually when I'm not around and they annoy my neighbors) they learn this lesson when they are wearing the collar. The technology in the collar is very intuitive; it corrects the dog at low levels and only increases the stimulation when the dog doesn't respond to the lower level stimulation. Once a dog understands the collar there is often no need to even turn it on.

These collars are not cruel, allowing a dog to bark incessantly is cruel, hitting or punishing a dog for barking is cruel and the cruelest thing of all is giving up on your dog and dumping him at a shelter where he will be killed is cruel, so please think about this. Barking is not a bad thing, and I don't recommend trying to stop a dog from barking all the time, this article is for dogs who are barking out of control. When you are ready to get a bark limiter, please don't get the cheapest one, get a good one. The two I recommend and use are the Sport Dog brand and the ECollar Technology brand. They can both be found online and the later can be found on my website blackbeltdogtraining.com

THE LOCAL

BARK BUSTING

Cats Meow, Cows Moo, Birds Chirp, People talk and YES... Dogs Bark

By Robert Cabral



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