

Training Proper Response to Doorbells

If your home is like mine, during these unprecedented times, there seem to be more delivery people than usual. As we're home more, the dogs are always ready to alert us to anyone approaching the house. I don't mind my dogs alerting me to someone approaching the door. However, I do mind them barking like an alien ship has landed on the front lawn and its occupants are about to invade!

When training for doorbell/visitor response you first need to decide if you want to allow your dog to bark and how much. I like to train my dogs to bark about 5 times and then stop. A barking GSD is a great deterrent for many unwanted visitors.

To start you have to be ready when they alert. After the number of barks you want to allow, use a command like "Quiet" or "Enough" and make a distracting noise so they stop barking, even for a moment. During that moment tell them "Good Quiet/Enough". A distracting noise can be anything from clapped hands to a 'shake can' (pennies in a can, or beans in a plastic bottle) It needs to be loud enough to be heard over the dog barking and distinctive enough to get their attention. You need to repeat this and praise for the moment of "Quiet" no matter how short. The moment of quiet will grow with practice, be sure to praise well as it does and include a treat if you feel the length of quiet time has improved.

Sometimes the distracting noise adds to the din and doesn't work. The other correction I will use for barking is a squirt bottle of water. It's basically the same idea but using a squirt of water in place of the distracting noise. Just squirt at the dog; a stream of water hitting them anywhere is usually enough to break their concentration for a moment. That's the moment you praise, "Good Quiet!"

If your dog has already developed the habit of barking too much, this will take some time to change the behavior. Be consistent.

Good Training!

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