THAT BARKING DOG

I bet I have your attention. Dogs bark. They bark at noises, at movement, at delivery people, at each other, at little kids, at cats, etc. Name something, and there is probably a dog that barks at it. I once met a dog who barked at the flash of light on his ceiling when a car passed in the street.

My ‘Next Door’ app was full of complaints about barking dogs--so I uninstalled it.

My neighbors across the street have multiple German Shepherds. I have multiple German Shepherds. I’ve been informed that walking between our houses is known in our neighborhood as “The German Shepherd Gauntlet.”

I want my dogs to bark **when someone approaches my house**. I also want them to stop when I ask them to. Training for this is time-consuming, and the outcomes can vary greatly. I don’t use bark collars or devices because they may affect all the dogs in the house, even the non-barking ones.

To train a dog not to bark, choose a command like “Quiet” or “Hush”, something that does not sound like you are barking back.

When the dog starts barking, use your command and a sharp noise, like a hand clap or a shake can. The noise will redirect their attention to you. When they are redirected and stop barking, even if only for a nanosecond, catch the moment and say “Good quiet!” They may start again, and you will repeat your actions three times. After the third time, remove the dog from the stimulus that is making him bark. (You make it stop.)

Do not get into a shouting match with your dog; you will not win.

If the sharp noise does not work, you can graduate to a spray bottle of plain water (set to stream), replacing the noise with a squirt of water on the dog's rear end. I’ve had this work well enough so that all I had to do was pick up the spray bottle and the barking stopped. Soon enough, the command worked without any other deterrent. (I had one student tell me a squirt of water was inhumane.)

Be patient with the training. It takes time, repetition, and consistency. When you are successful, there may be instances outside of your home where the command can be used, but it will not universally make your dog stop barking in every situation.

Karen Oliver, Bring Rover Over, November 2026