

Barking Dogs! How To Help Your Dog Be Quiet And Stop Annoying Barking

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Today we carry on from [podcast episode number 238](#), where we discussed why dogs may bark. And I'm going to preface today's podcast by giving you a friendly reminder. There's a spectrum of needs for a family pet.

At one end of the spectrum, let's say we have a pet rock. And what are the needs of a pet rock? And as you go up, you know I think the needs are fairly small for that pet rock. Like you can go on vacation for months and not need to leave that pet rock with any food or water.

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Now, going up the scale of needs, you might pass like I don't know, guppies, various birds, and you're going to get somewhere on the high end of needs, both physical and emotional needs is a dog. So, a dog is not a pet rock.

If you're a regular listener to this podcast, I know you know that. And I hope nobody thinks I'm talking down to them, but I need to preface that because today might be about reevaluating your expectations of your dog.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. You know, a couple of weeks ago, we ran a little poll on our Facebook page that said, 'Do you have a dog that barks and to a point that it's annoying and let us know why it is. Why do you believe it is that the dog is barking?'

And of those over 500 people who left a comment as to why their dog barks, the breakdown is like this. 19% said the dog barked when they wanted to initiate play. 17% were barking when you were preparing their food. 15% barked for attention. 12% because they were frustrated. 7% was because they were behind a barrier and 5% were either they were inside and wanted out or they were outside, and they wanted in.

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Now, I don't know how good you are with math, but let me just tell you that is 75% of the total number of people that answered that poll were in that breakdown. And today I'm going to give you a solution to every single one of those reasons.

I'm also going to circle back to what I talked about in podcast episode number 238, the reasons why dogs might be barking. I'm going to give you some clarity as to what you can do with each and every one of those reasons. And at the end, I'm going to give you a complete protocol of how you can overcome your dog's excessive barking.

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Now, I didn't say 'we're going to stop your dog from barking' because barking most often happens for one of two reasons. It is your dog's expressing their emotions and I feel in any trusting relationship, we each have the right to express our emotions. And number two, it's [a reinforced habit](#). So, I'm not saying we're going to stop it immediately. I'm saying we're going to be very, very patient with our approach and we are going to be very systematic in changing our dog's behavior, at least minimizing.



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So, you aren't talking to me about excessive barking. For example, I was traveling across the border driving our RV once and all my dogs traveled in their dog crates. And I got to the border crossing going into the United States and the guard said he needed to come into the RV. So, I opened the door and as soon as he stepped in, all of the dogs in their crate started barking.

He walked through, did his inspection, came back through. And as he was leaving, he said, "Those dogs aren't very well trained, are they?" And I said, "I guess that depends on the way you look at it. As a single woman driving an RV by myself, I think they're very well trained when a strange man walks onto my RV."

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Now, maybe I shouldn't have been so honest with this man who was deciding whether I was allowed in the United States or not, but it all worked out. My point is we don't want our dogs to stop barking. We love that our dogs are barking many times.

So, this podcast episode isn't about stopping barking. It's about identifying potential triggers and how we can alter those triggers so that we can have a more [harmonious relationship](#) with our dogs. That makes sense, right?

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So, the first thing I'd like you to think about is within your daily training, I'd like you to include seven games. Now the good news is all of these games are in our Recallers program or our Home School the Dog program, but many of them I've also included [on my YouTube channel](#). So, you can jump on over to YouTube and do a search for them.

So first of all, the Search Game where a dog knows when they can look for cookies on the floor. Number two would be [ItsYerChoice](#), meaning we're creating a game where the dog knows you're going to deliver reinforcement. That creates a little bit of frustration that a dog has to work through and cue the dramatic music that will come up later in today's podcast episode.

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Number three is Collar Grab Game. Number four is [Crate Games](#). Number five, The Relaxation Protocol, which you can find in [podcast episode 191](#). Number six is Hot Zone. Number seven is the Bring Me Game, the Retrieve Game. Now, I would put number eight because a lot of people will tell you the way to stop your dog from barking is to teach them to speak on cue.

And I'm going to put that you can teach your dog to speak on cue. But if you're going to teach your dog to speak on cue, make sure that you are teaching the dog to speak until you tell them to stop, meaning you teach them a cue and they keep doing it. And then you give them another cue and reinforcement so that the other cue, I would suggest it be something like, "shh," means stop barking.

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I don't recommend you use the word "quiet." Why? Because when your dog's barking, when you don't want them to, I have yet to hear anybody say "quiet" in a way that doesn't seethe with bitterness and resentment towards that barking dog.

I think it'd be really hard for you to "shh" that dog in a very angry and bitter, frustrated way. So, those are the skills. I'm just putting those out there. If you don't have them, work on them. They're all very, very important.



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Search, ItsYerChoice, Collar Grab, Crate Games, Hot Zone, Relaxation Protocol, and Bring Me. Those, if you don't have them, then I would strongly encourage you to work on them. My puppy who is not quite 16 weeks old really has all of those behaviors already dialed in.

And keep in mind, he didn't come to me until he was 11 weeks old. And I was out of town for a week in the month that he's been with me. So, all of those behaviors have been taught very, very well in just three weeks of time.

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So, it really isn't a big ask or a big investment of your time. And it's fun to teach your dogs those skills. Okay, let's go over the things that I mentioned in my last podcast episode that may be the reason why your dog is barking or barking excessively.

Number one was it's a breed trait. So, there are breeds like hunting dogs. There's a breed in New Zealand, I believe it's called the Huntaway dog, that they actually bark while they work. It's part of how they go about working. There are a lot of dogs, I mentioned Beagles or Huskies that bark as something that's kind of built into their DNA.

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But breed doesn't give any dog a get out of jail free card. I hope you all got the reference to Monopoly right there. What I mean is you can't just say, "Oh, they're a Terrier so it's okay. I don't have to do any work." No, no, no. Remember we want to minimize any excess of barking.

So, if you have in your mind, "This is a blank, therefore they bark." please, let's just clean that thought out alright and let's polish up the brain and get some "My dog can do anything" thoughts back in your head. Alright so, breed, yes, maybe reason why your dog barks at times when others don't, but it isn't a reason for excessive barking.

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Number two, emotions. Alright so, let's go over some of the lists and I'm going to give you some of the things that you can do. Number one, excited. 'My dog gets way too excited.' Have you taught your dog the Relaxation Protocol? I'm not saying that protocol is going to change everything. It's going to be part of the change as well.

Because also we're going to talk about this later, we're going to talk about [some of the triggers](#) that makes that dog feel the need to vocalize and sing the songs of their people. So, we'll start off with podcast episode number 191, that Relaxation Protocol. Number two, I mentioned that the dog barks because they're trying to initiate play. And I also mentioned that was the number one thing listed in our Facebook poll.

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So, why is your dog initiating play by barking at you? I would have to think it comes down to two reasons. Number one, there isn't enough conditioning of the dog being okay without you entertaining them. So, how much Crate Games has that dog played?

How much time has that dog spent with educational games like Nina Ottoson's food games or what I call the puppy bombs where you are working somewhere, and the dog can be in their ex-pen just working through these games or chewing on a bone so that they know you don't have to be the center of the world every waking moment of their life.



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They have to learn that they can just chill and watch the world go by. That's number one. Does your dog know how to relax? Can you put your dog in a crate, say in your bedroom, and then you do some work in the kitchen, or are they going to be very anxious about that?

So, if you've played Crate Games, and if you've taught your dog how to relax, and number three, if you've also looked for opportunities when your dog is just curled up in a dog bed and walk by and reinforce that. Remember, reinforcement builds behavior.

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So, you can drop some cookies there. You don't have to say anything, just give them a pat on the head when they're away from you, relaxing. You can build that up as a behavior. It's called the Hot Zone. I mentioned that right at the top. But anytime you see the dog relaxing away from you, take the opportunity to mark that 'that is good.'

Now the other part of that is what are the triggers that your dog knows that means something amazing is going to happen? What are those triggers? Like, do you have a word? "Do you want to go to the building?" is what I say to the dogs. "We're going to go to the building." And then they get excited in their movement.

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But those dogs also have reinforced triggers that I unconditionally put in them that they will then lead to me getting up and doing something with them. For example, Momentum will come and sit in front of me and just stare at me. And I'll know, "Oh, do you have to go outside?" If I let her outside and she just goes and lays down on the grass instead of going to the bathroom, I knew, "Okay, you probably don't just want to go outside."

So, I'll bring her back in. I'll go back to what I was doing. She'll probably come back and stare at me. At some point I may get up and go and train. But I also may say, "You can go and lie down." I don't want the dog to know that this is a given, 'I will always do that.'

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Momentum or This! will often come and put their head on my lap if I'm working at my desk as if to say, "I think it's time we go and do some work." So, these are triggers that I'm okay with, that they may lead to something, but they won't always lead to something.

You've got to become very present to the reinforcing that you are giving your dog's trigger. So, when your dog barks at you, do you laugh at them? "Oh, I guess you want to go train, do you? That's great." and get up and train. That's why your dog's barking at you.

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Does your dog bark at you and you maybe throw something for them for a little while, while you're at your desk? Oh, nay nay, in the words of the late great John Pinette. No, no, those aren't acceptable triggers in my world. If you want a dog that doesn't bark in your face. Now, the initiation of play also needs to be considered [with another dog](#).

So, if Tater Salad and Belief get playing together and get very vocal, guess what happens? We break it up. So, they've learned that they can play and face wrestle as long as they don't go crazy. And I like my dogs playing with each other. I like to see them running around and having fun, but I don't like the anarchy of the barking that goes along with it.



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And so, they've learned, we just distract them and tell them, "Go and lie down," the play gets interrupted. So, barking to initiate play with another dog may be okay with you. You set the rules in your home. I just don't like the screaming that may happen with the Bulldog mix and the Terrier mix.

So, you decide what those rules are, but just know, whatever you're allowing with regards to vocalization has got to be okay anywhere. So, if you're okay with your dog barking at the walls for no reason, just because they want attention, it's got to be okay when you're staying at a posh hotel at two o'clock in the morning. It's got to be okay when you're staying at your in-laws.

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So, establish those rules that are going to be okay no matter where life takes you. Number three thing I mentioned from emotional state in our last podcast was anxiety. And for that, my friends, you've got episode number 191, The Relaxation Protocol.

But dovetail that with [podcast episode number 200](#), where I had two amazing students of mine, [Nadine Hehli and Simone Fasel](#), who talked about their FRIDA Protocol for separation anxiety. It's just amazing. Come on over to YouTube and leave me a comment if you would like to see them run their program in English that they've been running with great success in German.

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Emotional state number four, the dog's curious. So, I think that's okay. The dog is like, "I'm not sure what that is over there." A lot of times what we call alarm barking, where the dog gets really overexcited, those things are going to really be minimized the more you can help that dog habituate to new environments and generalize all kinds of stimuli.

So, how often do you take that dog to the park and sit on a bench and just reinforce them for chilling as life goes by? If they're a dog who hasn't seen or heard a lot of noises, then they're more likely going to react to the noises that they hear. Now, there are some dogs that maybe it's genetics or maybe it is the lack of early socialization where they just are a little bit more nervous and yip at everything.

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You can counter-condition that. I'll get to more of that later. But just know that a lot of times it is, they just haven't been exposed to enough newness. That's on you, my friend. Get out there and help your dog experience life and to make everything that might at first be, "Oh my gosh, what's that? It's a boat launching?!" It's just white noise. It's just what people do.

Number five emotion, your dog is telling you they are afraid. They're barking because they are afraid. That is communication and that has got to be okay. I'm not telling you; you just ignore it and walk away. You go back home, and you say, "My dog was afraid of this, I'm going to start a plan to help counter condition, build confidence in that environment. It's feedback. It's got to be okay."

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What am I going to do if my dog's afraid in that situation? I'm going to toss treats behind me, say the word "search", top of the podcast episode, I mentioned the Search Game. And if the dog doesn't take the food because they are so afraid, I am getting out of dodge.

Meaning I am getting my dog out of that environment and going back to generalization, habituation, turning things into white noise, and [counter conditioning](#) that what they might be afraid of in that instance.



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Number six, frustration. If your dog is barking because they're frustrated, you've got to evaluate your own training. Number one, play games that may frustrate the dog without you. Those are those food puzzles. Starting easy, helping them to have success with them.

And if you are not familiar with how that looks, leave me a comment on YouTube and I will do a separate video on how to introduce and escalate the dog's use of these food puzzles. So, I would like like my dog to have to figure out how to get the cookies out of a food puzzle, or out of a puppy bomb, or out of a stuffed Toppl, or stuffed toy with food in it.

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That gives them some frustration that they have to work, and they don't vocalize for that. Why would they vocalize when we are training? Because we're judging them. And we are saying, "That's good, that's not." Or worse, we're adding to them when they are wrong. "Wrong, ah-ah, no, eh, no, here, uh." We're judging.

So, you've got to look at your training protocols and you've got to minimize the frustration in your training. You're going to do that by having a great plan and number two, manipulating the environment. So, you're [giving the dog clarity](#). Dogs who are barking at a frustration in anything you're training are [giving you feedback](#).

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You are not presenting clear enough criteria for their success. So really that's on you, that's on your trainer, that's on the training plan. With my young puppy, I look for even the slightest, slightest signs of frustration in his training.

And I decide if that is okay, will we go forward, or will I just change the path and build something else so that I can give him more clarity in what we are looking at? It's rare. And I can tell you that in the month that I've had this puppy, he has not barked at me in training because he was frustrated, which I like to think means my training plans have been spot on for him.

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Okay, and the final thing I mentioned was the reinforced behaviors and dogs bark mostly because somewhere along the way we've reinforced it. Now reinforcement doesn't mean, "Oh, you barked. I'm going to give you a cookie." Reinforcement can be something you aren't even aware of.

I remember when I was renting an agility field from a woman and at the end, she wanted to ask me a training question, so I went over to the fence where she was standing. And I said, sure thing. As she started asking me the question, her Border Collie just started barking in her face. Bark, bark, bark, bark.

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So, she took a tennis ball off the fence that she had stuck in the fence, and she gave it to the dog. I said, "You just reinforced the barking you know, right?" "No, I didn't. No, I just helped her to be quiet for when we're talking." I said, "Yes, you may have helped her to be quiet for when we're talking, but you're going to get more of what presented the tennis ball."

So, she didn't even see that she had reinforced the dog for barking. But your reinforcement might come in the form of you turning and looking at your dog, pointing at them, snapping your finger, going shh, or zip it, or cut it, stop, or worse, escalating that.



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All of that, even yelling at the dog so that they cower, [please don't do that], is reinforcing. Yes, you're getting a momentary stop of the barking. They may not even bark for the next few minutes, but you have taught them a behavior pattern that to get you to come over and give you attention to the dog, they have to bark.

So, you need to evaluate what reinforcement the dog is getting. And they might not even be getting it from you. If you live with somebody else, they might inadvertently be getting it from somebody else or they're getting it from the environment. So, picture the dog on guard, standing on the back of your couch, looking at the window.

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"I got you, mom. I got you." "Bark, there's a squirrel!" "It's okay, I got it. Whoa, the squirrel left. Okay." "Bark, there's a kid going to school. Yeah, I gotcha. I gotcha, mom." So, dogs that are on guard or guarding their post, you need to manipulate that environment so that that doesn't happen.

Because the barking is getting reinforced because the person leaves, the squirrel leaves, the cat leaves, eventually they all leave. "I did my job! All is safe here in Gotham because I barked." You see, barking so often is just [a reinforced pattern](#) and we need to break that pattern.

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So, there we've knocked out all of the things I mentioned in our last episode. Going through the poll from Facebook, I've also hit most of those. So, the dog who wants to play, check. We've talked about it. The dog who knows it's feeding time. Here's a newsflash to you. Their life must have a predictably unpredictable schedule.

Meaning, if you feed at the same time, if you train at the same time, if you play ball at the same time, your dogs are going to know that pattern of reinforcement and they will probably start to vocalize at the very least get agitated.

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And so, have some leeway or maybe even have like three or four rotational feeding, playing, training schedules that if you're a person who loves a schedule and loves a timetable, then you can just randomly pick from a barrel. "I'm going to do this one this week." "This is the schedule of feeding and training." So, predictably unpredictable.

Our dogs, they get fed anywhere from three o'clock in the afternoon to eight o'clock at night. I now feed my dogs only once a day. So, when I was feeding twice a day, it was anywhere from eight o'clock in the morning till 10 o'clock in the morning, and then similar at night. Predictably unpredictable.

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Number two, you need to have a place where the dog goes when you're feeding. So, the Hot Zone, you can 'hop it up' while I'm getting the food bowls out. I would change, if you've got barky dogs, change the kind of food bowls you're using. So, if you're using ceramic, then go to stainless steel. If you're using stainless steel, go to ceramic.

And so, as you [put those food bowls out](#), if you get dogs that are stirring, then just turn and wait. They should get in their Hot Zone. When they get in their Hot Zone, you can go back. If you move a bowl and nobody stirs, toss them some treats for staying in the Hot Zone. So then instead of them screaming at you to go faster, because that gets reinforced. How? Because you keep making the food.



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If you keep on going on the process, it leads to the ultimate reinforcement that they want. You're reinforcing the barking. So, I have been with my dogs if when they stay in the Hot Zone and they get random reinforcement, you know it's maybe twice a week now that I might toss them some cookies for being in their Hot Zone while I'm preparing food.

I honestly don't prepare food that often for my dogs anymore, but I digress. But if anybody was to start barking at me or vocalizing at me, I would just, I would stop and pause. If the vocalizing continues, I leave. And the dog learns that the process gets longer. You are actually stopping the process with the barking.

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But please, please, please. No. That is punishment and it's very frustrating for the dog. So that doesn't happen until you've built up the value for the Hot Zone and you've given them the behaviors that they can do to be right before you tell them that you don't like it when they are "wrong."

So, this has been a very long podcast. In the next podcast episode, I'm going to give you a complete protocol on how you can address any kind of barking. And if you have any other questions, leave me a comment, jump over to YouTube or on our podcast page and leave me a comment about, 'Does this make sense?' and is there a specific time your dog barks that I haven't yet addressed? I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

Learn To Play ItsYerChoice:

<https://recallers.com/iycsummit-join/>

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 238: Barking Dogs! Understanding Canine Vocalization To Prevent Nuisance Barking](#)

[Podcast Episode 205: The Hidden World Of Reinforcement For Dogs And Why You Need To Know](#)

[Podcast Episode 186: 2 Types Of Connection With Dogs: Dog Agility And Daily Life Case Studies](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Training Games with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 191: Get Your Dog To Calm Down With This Common Sense Protocol For Relaxation](#)

[Podcast Episode 112: Stressed Dog? How Trigger Stacking Might Be Putting Your Dog Over Threshold](#)

[Podcast Episode 14: Creating Intentional Multi-Dog Household Harmony](#)

[Podcast Episode 200: Solve Your Dog's Separation Anxiety With FRIDA: Expanding Calm With Functional Relaxation](#)

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[Podcast Episode 165: Why Do Dogs Bark In Cars And How To Stop It](#)

[Podcast Episode 188: Why You Should Change Your Strategy Rather Than Your Criteria When Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 189: All The Things That Influence Your Dog's Behavior And What Behavior Tells You](#)

[Podcast Episode 42: Behavior Chains: Are You Teaching Your Dog to be Bad to be Good?](#)

[Podcast Episode 225: Keep The Food Bowl! Why Dogs Don't Need 100% Hand Feeding](#)



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About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



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