



## 3 keys to stop the barking dog

By Cesar Millan

It is completely natural for dogs to bark, and it's one of their most important forms of communication after energy and body language. Dogs will bark as a warning, to protect their pack and territory. They will also bark to express excitement.

Those forms of barking are rarely a nuisance and don't last long. That is why nuisance barking almost always has the same cause and the same solution. When a dog barks excessively, it's telling you that it is bored and is looking for stimulation or a challenge

### **Pack Leadership**

Inevitably, excessive barking indicates there is a problem with the human, and not the dog; there is something not balanced in the pack, so the dog's needs are not being met. The barking is the only way the dog must tell you something is wrong.

A barking dog needs Exercise, Discipline, and then Affection, in that order. Exercise and Discipline will provide the physical and psychological stimulation that your dog craves. Affection — but only when your dog is in a calm, submissive state — will reinforce the behavior that you want without rewarding the behavior that you don't.

### **Controlling Excitement**

I'm sure you've seen it countless times — somebody with a small, excited dog that won't stop barking, who then picks up the dog to try to stop it. Unfortunately, this is exactly the

wrong approach. The attention and affection from being picked up tells the dog, "I like what you're doing right now."

This is unintended positive reinforcement, and it only takes a few times to train a dog that its barking is something you want. But it doesn't only happen in the above scenario. How many of you come home to be greeted by your dog's excited jumping and spinning and barking? And how many of you immediately give affection in return for what you interpret as happiness?

This is one of the most difficult things for dog lovers to grasp. When a dog returns to its pack, they are not greeted with excited barking and jumping. Sometimes, there will be sniffs and tail wags, but most of the time it's no big deal when a dog comes back to the pack. Unfortunately, we humans tend to make a big deal out of coming and going from home, and this puts your dog in the wrong state of mind.

If you greet your dog in an excited manner, then she will come to expect your return to be a time of excitement. This means that, while she's waiting for you to come back, she will anticipate that excitement, and become frustrated and bored. Now, if you also make a big deal before you go, you've left your dog in an excited state as well. This is the perfect formula to create an excessive barking problem.

### **Exercise and Discipline**

The solution is simpler than people think. It begins with providing your dog plenty of exercise via the walk, along with discipline by giving him jobs to do and commands to learn. But, most importantly, it requires that you do not reward unwanted behavior, particularly excitement, with affection.

Don't worry. Your dog won't think you're mean if you aren't petting her or giving out treats 24/7. Your dog wants to earn your affection. Allowing her to do that, and to see your happiness is, to your dog, the biggest reward of all.