

Who's at the door?

One of the most frequent issues we encounter as dog trainers is barking and jumping at visitors. We call this the door scene and it is a major issue for most dog owners even though in 90% of the cases it is easy and fast to fix.

Every time someone is at the door your dog just goes nuts and now that Halloween is just around the corner you can just imagine what will happen when all those trick or treaters are at your door step.

Let's explore the source of the issue. Dogs are den animals and they see the house as their den. The most important part of the den is the entrance. The pack leader or alpha dog always controls the entrance in order to assesses who comes in or goes out. If your dog answers the door first it is a good indicator that he sees himself as the alpha in the house and thereby it is his job to assess who is at the door. He does this by rushing to the door and telling the rest of the pack (by barking) that he will assess the visitors and protect you from whoever is trying to get into the den. Some dogs will rush to the door and jump up on visitors with out barking, this is also their way of assessing the visitors.

In order to fix this issue you need to show your dog that you are a good leader and that you can take care of the pack and that you can assess the visitors. Once the dog sees you as the leader he will follow pack structure and will allow you to do your job.

It is important to understand that good leadership is gained by remaining calm and using proper body language, consistency and clear communication. Anger, frustration, yelling or becoming physical are not traits of a stable leader. They are seen as inconsistent behaviours and thereby the dog must take over the leadership and be an even stronger leader because they perceive the other pack member, in this case you, as out of control and incapable of leading the pack safely.

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Alana & Marco are owners of a Bark Busters franchise. They are dog behaviour therapists and trainers that specialize in behaviour issues such as: barking, jumping, pulling on lead, separation anxiety and all types of aggression.

Check out their website at www.barkbusters.ca or contact them at 1-866-418-4584
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