

## Dogs Behind Fence Lines

Rude dogs behind fences cause many of us cross the street or change directions completely. Having a dog lunge and bark behind a fence is unsettling and can cause even the mildest dog to react rudely in return. But there are other strategies to try; one's that can help your pup whenever they're faced with a surprise bark.

First teach and practice a Leave it behavior, something that gets your pup to come completely off of something. Then use it when walking past the reactive dog; start across the street or far enough away that your dog doesn't feel threatened. And be sure you have your body positioned between the dogs. Walk quickly past the situation; our impulse is to slow down and attend to our pup but you're better off getting past quickly and rewarding afterwards.

Repeat this until your dog doesn't have any issues walking by the dog at a distance then move a little closer; only a couple of feet at a time. At each new distance repeat until your dog is comfortable. Return to a previous distance if something upsets them or they're having a bad day (we're teaching them they can always get the distance they need but that they don't really need it).

If your dog is the one being rude, there are some things you can do to either manage the situation or train your dog to try some alternative behaviors.

To manage the situation, you may consider blocking your dog's access to the fence line. This can be done by putting a temporary fence a foot or two inside the fence or by using other outdoor obstacles. If a dog is running up and down the fence line, it's important to break the pattern by putting things in their path so they can't get away with it any longer.

A dog in a yard is often just looking around – until something catches their eye. If the only thing catching their attention is the neighbor's cat or the daily dog walkers they're going to be hyper-focused on the fence line. Consider adding some wind catchers or other eye-grabbing items on your fence so your dog isn't only seeing stuff that excites them.

To teach your dog to stop the behavior entirely it's still important to break the pattern. I find it works best if I can correct the dog from the fence line (rather than from the porch, house or some other location). By positioning myself where I know the dog is going to react then interrupt and redirect the dog just as they're about to react, I can often break the pattern and redirect the dog. Often a well-timed and thrown tennis ball works or a squeaker but the key here is repetition. The dog has been practicing this a bunch, you're not going to get rid of it with just a handful of practice sessions.

A reactive dog can be upsetting but it can also be a great opportunity to work your dog past a distraction; use it to your advantage and remember your part of the equation as well – watch the tension in your leash.

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