How to Train a Dog to Guard Your House

Most people expect a dog to naturally guard their house. Some dogs, however, have been taught that strangers coming over are a cause for celebration and will be happy to greet almost anyone.



Training Your Dog to Guard Your House

- [ ] 1. Teach your dog basic obedience: If you have a yard you can work in you should use it for training. He will become more territorial as he learns to obey your commands while working in that area. Be sure to teach basic commands like sit, down, stay, leave it and you should also teach him to bark on command.
- [ ] 2. Part of his more advanced obedience training should include teaching impulse control: When you have a visitor he should sit on command, lie down, then watch as the person comes in; teach impulse control so that he does not have to run over, jump up, and try to play.
- [ ] 3. Run the property boundaries with your dog: You should do this every day at the end of your obedience lessons. Your dog will learn his territory and be familiar with the land he should be protecting.
- [ ] 4. Leave your dog alone in the area he needs to guard: When your dog is trained and old enough to be confident (usually about 8 months for most dogs) start teaching him to guard the house.
- [ ] 5. Have someone come up and make some noise: If you have left him in the front yard, for example, the person can come up and knock on the fence. If he is in the house the person should come up and knock on a window. This needs to be a person that the dog is not familiar with. (If your dog smells the person and it is someone he knows the training session will be of no benefit.)
- [ ] 6. When the dog approaches and barks, the person needs to make a sound like they are frightened and run off: All you are doing at this point is increasing the dog´s confidence. If the person reports that the dog walked up to the fence with tail wagging and did not bark or show any other signs of guarding his territory, you can try this again.
- [ ] 7. Keep practicing every day. When the dog is barking at the stranger you should do this again when you are in the house: When the person makes a noise and runs off, go outside and praise the dog and then give him a special treat.
- [ ] 8. To help your dog focus on the job, let the “stranger” introduce some distractions: You can be sitting a fair distance away when these distractions are introduced. Start with a piece of meat: when your dog stops barking and goes to investigate,

order him to “leave it”. Be sure to try everything that your dog is always distracted by. When he ignores the distraction and returns to guarding the house you have reached a whole new level! Give him plenty of praise and a special treat.

- [ ] 9. If your dog is showing fear when the “stranger” approaches and makes noise, you are probably taking things too fast for your dog. Try the exercise again the next day, with a different stranger.

- [ ] You want your dog to defend your house but still allow visitors and friends to come in without any problem. If you teach your dog to be a watchdog he will fulfill your needs but not overdo it. **There are a few important things to remember about training a dog to guard your house:**

- [ ] Just choosing the correct breed of dog will take care of a lot of your problems for you. Some breeds of dog are highly territorial and will guard their home with little training. I have a neighbor who owns a Rottweiler/Boxer cross, however, who will not even bark at anyone hanging around his house. Sometimes even breeds that guard normally need a little encouragement.

- [ ] Certain breeds are unlikely to ever feel like they should protect their territory and will be difficult or impossible to train. If you have a sighthound, do not expect her to guard your house.

- [ ] You will need to decide whether or not your dog should be trained to guard his territory. If you live next to a school or on a street with frequent foot traffic your dog will not be able to identify those persons who intend to break in—he will just bark constantly!

- [ ] Training a dog to guard your house can also get you and him into a lot of trouble. A dog that normally guards his house may bite almost anyone, even a neighbor that he knows to be friendly. I discussed this issue recently with a nervous dog owner. He had a neighbor over, helping him fix his furnace, and they needed another tool so the neighbor left the house by the back door. The dog owner had put the dog out in the backyard. When the neighbor returned through the backyard the dog first alerted his owner but when the neighbor continued to advance the dog bit him. The dog was doing his job but the neighbor was still upset and he may end up being sued.

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