

Here is your Top Tip number

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Top Tip #4

## **The Doorbell !!.**

*Hello again. Today I am going back to a practical problem that seems very common, and that is regarding dogs that go 'crazy' when someone visits you at home. If your own dog is not one of these, then you have done well, but I am sure you know exactly what I mean.*

*You might be visiting a friend's house, and the moment you knock on*

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the door or ring the doorbell, the madness begins. The explosion of noise and activity can be quite overwhelming. Then you might hear the vain attempts of the home owner, trying to pacify, or negotiate, or panicking at the chaos, or maybe they have developed an 'action plan' for when someone comes around, and the dog is immediately evacuated to the kitchen, the garden or behind the baby gate. Yes, you do know exactly what I mean don't you?

And have you ever noticed, that 2 dogs seem to be 10 times worse than just 1? It all just spirals out of control doesn't it.

So, let's have look at what can be done to remedy this situation.

Regards... Glen Stanford.

The UK Dog Whisperer.

Firstly, let us take a look at the dogs behaviour at the moment the doorbell rings. Maybe the dog(s) are simply going about their normal day, when suddenly... **"DING DONG!"**.

There will be a reaction that is probably along these lines. The dog might...

1. Run to the door, barking like crazy and jumping at the door.
  2. Run to a nearby window and bark at the visitor.
  3. Stand still barking, and wait to see if you let the visitor in.
  4. Bark, and disappear behind the sofa, or into another room.
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5. Any of the above, and many more variations.

But whatever the reaction, it is clear to see that the dog has been **'triggered'** by the doorbell. What is worth noting, is that the behaviour that follows has been developed solely by the dog (or possibly learned from another dog that has issues with people visiting). I am sure the home owner didn't teach it to run around in circles, peeing on the carpet. And this is at the heart of the whole problem. When there is a problem to solve (for the dog), and in this case, it is a confusion over what to do when someone visits, then there are only 3 options.

1. Learn from another animal
2. Make it up as you go along and see what works.
3. (As in the case of the dog hiding behind the sofa) Avoid having to face the problem.

Now let's imagine how you would like it to be when the doorbell rings.

Maybe a couple of barks from the dog to let us know someone is outside, (after all, having an alert dog is a benefit, but we don't need a 'burglar alarm' that we cannot switch off!), and then maybe the dog follows us to the hallway, where it waits behind us, about 3 meters from the door, and watches as you invite someone to enter, and then joins you both in another room, where the polite welcoming pleasantries begin.

**Wow, wouldn't** that be bliss?

Believe me, it is all very possible.

Let's start **'Making A Difference'** (A favourite catchphrase of mine).

To me, it is not a problem that the dog has some emotive reaction to the doorbell. As long as it knows what to do next, then we haven't got a problem.

So, the first thing I am going to do is train the dog to react to the doorbell with a behaviour that suits me. And to do this I will need either a mat or a blanket, and

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a handful of the dog's favourite treats. If you remember from Top Tips 1 & 2, everything is broken down into 'easy to learn' parts, and we don't move on to the next part until we have been successful at the previous one.

So, here are the steps...

1. Put the mat 2-3 meters away from the front door, in the position that you would like the dog to stay when you are answering the door. (The dog must be able to see what's going on. Don't separate the dog from the event)

From your usual living space, then wave a treat under the dog's nose, so he/she knows there is something nice going on. Walk to the mat, and tell the dog "*on the mat*" or simply, just the one word "*mat*". Help the dog understand that once it is on the mat, sitting quietly, it receives the treat. You may have to 'lead' the dog with the treat, so that it is positioned on the mat, before telling it to "*sit*", and rewarding with the treat. Don't worry too much about the dog being completely on the mat, as long as part of the dog is on it, that will do.

Note: Remember in tips 1 & 2, it was vital to get the dog in a calm state of mind before proceeding? This is very important in this exercise as well. You don't just want the dog physically positioned, but wound up like a coiled spring, you want the mind and body relaxed as well. This is why we do this exercise repeatedly before using a trigger. Because we need to train the emotive response, as well as the physical. Then at a later stage we might tap lightly on the front door, and as soon as the dog comes flying around the corner, we go straight into the exact same training process we just practiced. Of course, the dog will be much more excited by the trigger, and may not get it right first time, but with continual effort, the knock will become louder, and eventually become the doorbell, and eventually even that will not hold the power it once did. The dog will not be so sensitive to the doorbell, or as we say, "hair triggered".

2. Once this basic mat training is flowing very well, all you need to do, is keep 'upping the challenge'. Ask a friend to knock on the door (not the doorbell yet), and you go straight into action. As they say in the emergency services "My training kicked in". And so will yours. Then open the door slightly and chat with

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your friend. If the dog leaves the mat to investigate, simply close the door, and tell it to get back on the mat. Then try again. And slowly keep increasing the challenge by inviting your friend into the hallway, and then into the living room, or kitchen. The dog can follow, but cannot be allowed to demand attention. Manners get rewarded. Skills get rewarded.. demands and bad etiquette do not.

If demanding attention is you dogs next problem to resolve, then by now, you can probably come up with a 'step by step' action plan that you design yourself. Just keep the calm, assertive mindset, and you won't go far wrong. And one last thing. You won't have to leave the mat there forever, and you don't need to give treats every time, once the dog is trained. He/she will be quite happy just assisting you in answering the door, and meeting someone .

I have known cases where unfortunate dog owners have put up with months, and sometimes years of chaos every time somebody visits, and in some cases, the dog never actually gets to meet the visitor, so it is hardly likely to change. And yet with the correct approach, I have had helped these dogs change their response in under 2 HOURS!.

OK, the owners sometimes take a little longer to train!, but the dogs seem to appreciate the organisation that is created.

Until next time...

*Best Wishes... Glen*



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