



The Mannerly Dog

Nancy M. Kelly, B.S., CPDT-KA
Animal Trainer & Behavior Consultant
www.TheMannerlyDog.com
713.503.6338, mobile

Training Tip Sheet: No Barking and Lunging at the Front Door!

If your dog barks and lunges at the front door when someone comes over, he probably begins to get excited as soon as someone pulls into your driveway, maybe even before.

Be alert and ready to start training before your dog perceives someone coming; have visitors call you as they're turning onto your street.

Even more important, train your dog in a "pretend" situation – when there's not anyone coming over. He'll learn more quickly when there's no excitement involved.

If your dog has terrible manners when visitors come to the front door, you may need professional help to train him to handle things differently.

But first, try these suggestions to get him started on a different approach:

- If your dog can lie down when asked, teach him to lie down on a rug or mat near the door. Choose the location carefully – place him where you can easily give him treats while opening and closing the door; at first, you'll be giving him a treat every couple of seconds while he lies on the mat. It's also best to place him where he can see who is at the door. Put a leash on your dog for training, so that he doesn't escape out the front door when you open it.
- We can start with separate training exercises for opening and closing the door, knocking on the door, and the doorbell.
 - Opening and Closing the Door: Put your dog on his mat, open the door just a crack, and give him a treat; make sure he remains lying down! If he gets up, don't give him the treat, close the door, get him lying down again, and open the door just a crack again; give him the treat if he remains lying down this time.
 - Knocking on the Door: We use classical conditioning for this, just like Pavlov. You don't have to put your dog on the mat for this; just have him close to you, knock on a wall or door, and give him a treat; there's no specific behavior involved – just pairing the sound of the knock with a treat. He'll begin expecting a treat when he hears a knock, and that alone will make his behavior at the front door better; he won't be barking and lunging at the door, he'll be salivating and looking at you for his treat.
 - The Doorbell: Get a doorbell ringtone on your phone to make this easy! Ring the doorbell and give your dog a treat – just like in the description above about Knocking. Your dog will begin expecting a treat when he hears a doorbell.

Ultimately, you can put all these things together to create a very mannerly behavior at the front door; but training each of these separately will stop the barking and lunging so you have some control over your dog when visitors come.