

## Shock Collars – Barbaric? Cruel?

People get rid of dogs that are jack-asses. And dogs can do things that get them killed.

- Biting a kid, biting the owner. Biting everyone. Biting a lawyer.
- Barking to the extent that neighbors are complaining, or the owner is contemplating getting rid of the pet.
- Growling at everyone, or (understandably) at lawyers.
- Attacking or trying to attack other dogs.
- Pulling on the leash so obnoxiously that nobody wants to walk them.
- Ignoring your earnest call as a Pit Bull cuts through your backyard
- Ignoring your earnest call and running out into traffic and getting hit by a car
- Destroying the house.

Using your hands for some of these corrections might make small breeds hand shy. A shock collar beats yelling because when a very young dog's (6+ months) exuberance gets the better of them, you can yell all you want. Shock collars don't belong on dogs under 3 months unless growling has shown up early.

It's best with adolescent dogs: If you shock the dog the *first* time he performs bad behavior, you could use the 'vibration' function after that in most cases. Eventually, better manners are habituated.

I do not endorse the use of a shock collar for behaviors that do not threaten a dog's ability to be a companion. For example

- I do not recommend the use of a shock collar in any form relative to housebreaking.
- I do not recommend giving the shock controller to a child.
- There is a difference between annoying behavior, and behaviors that will ultimately result in the owners getting rid of the dog.
- Using a shock collar to try to keep a dog from chewing or scratching itself is cruel.

**There is no better application for a shock collar than the dog who is growling and snapping.** *During the first year, growling at normal people ultimately leads to biting. It is not okay for your dog to growl at the end of its leash trying to get at other dogs and people, or when meeting strangers that you know, guests to your house, strangers just walking down the street. People defend the behavior because they want the dog to be protective, sadly, without extraordinary training, most dogs that start out growling will ultimately indulge the vocabulary word of biting. Much to the detriment of its legal and social position.*

### **Here is how I made my dog Ajax into a star pet:**

We took him into my son's apartment complex and when he growled at people who were not directly interacting with us walking through the breezeways we gave him a correction. We played with his ears while he was trying to eat, [which is the fastest way to make a dog growl] (We set him up for the bad behavior) we told him "NO"! And instantly gave him a correction. When he scratched at doors when we put him in the bedroom, we stood outside the door and gave him a correction every time his nail touched the door. That was the end of that behavior. When he would stand in the front yard and bark his head off at the neighbors, we gave him a correction, blew his training whistle, and when he came running in we gave him a treat. My dog Isabella barked so constantly, the city came by the house. We bought her a bark collar. It shocks in response to barking. Problem solved.

There is an important flipside to my advice and that is: Despite the fact that you are the "baby-eater using a shock collar", you must also smother your dog with affection. Ajax is on the bed, always in my arms, constantly being stroked and praised. It is our deep dark horrible secret that has made him such a model citizen.

I will close my article with this: ***If your dog growls at children, put at least seven shock collars on them. Because biting a kid (especially a lawyer's kid) is a "story ender" almost every single time.***