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Knock Knock! Calming crazy dogs when company calls

One of the biggest complaints dog owners have is that their pooch goes crazy when he hears a knock at the door. With a little training and consistency, these front door antics can easily be corrected!

The first step in fixing the problem is to understand where it comes from. Dog's are cause and effect creatures - they form associations which allow them to predict certain outcomes. In this instance, your dog knows that when they hear a knock, it's consistently followed by a stranger at the door. Door knock to them equals stranger (and potential threat or exciting visitor!). The easiest way then to combat this issue is to change the association our dog is making.

To work through this problem, you will need to find a friend or family member willing to help. You will also need your dog's favorite treat hidden away in a pocket so he doesn't know you have it. Have your friend or family member give a good strong knock while you are watching TV. Completely ignore the knock at the door as if it never happened. Your dog is bound to go nuts but as soon as he realizes you aren't budging, he should come back to investigate. Once he is calm, not barking and relaxed, reward with a treat. This will help to reinforce calm behavior. Remember, sitting at your feet isn't calm! A calm dog is laying down, relaxed and not paying attention to you. This is the point you would go to him and offer the treat. Repeat this routine several times. Mix up your activities. Sometimes when you hear the knock, move towards the door as if you were going to answer it, and then walk away. This will help desensitize the other cue the dog is looking for - you answering the door! If you are doing it right, you should notice your dog freaking out a bit less each time he hears the door knock. Remember, your pooch has years of experience barking at a knock at the door so don't expect miracles right away. Take it slow and be consistent.

Ideally, you will stage fake door knocks regularly. Your dog should be exposed to these staged door knocks and doorbell rings more often than he's exposed to the real thing. This will help him to learn that door knocks don't always mean a stranger is present and will help teach him that he only gets rewarded when he is calm and relaxed. One day of training isn't enough! Although your pooch may seem to get it, you can bet the next day, he will be back to his old self when he hears a knock at the door. Couple this training with [boundary training](#) at the front door and you will have a well behaved pooch in no time!