



Sound Desensitization for Puppies

Conditioning your puppy to accept with comfort and happiness sudden, unexpected / loud sounds can help prevent sound sensitivity, like thunder phobia, fear associated with fireworks, backfires, gunshots etc.

It is easy to create a positive 'conditioned emotional response to these sounds if you start while your puppy is young and associate the sounds with something your puppy really enjoys (treats, praise, the yippee game, playing with toys etc.).

Start by playing the sounds quite softly – basically you want the puppy to notice the sound, but have little more than a 'so what' response at first. Later as the puppy works through the protocol, you want a 'woohoo' response - happy anticipation of something great. Watch your dog's body language closely so you can start to see these changes.

Gradually increase the volume of the recording until you can play at full volume. Anytime you see your puppy look distressed – STOP! Reduce the volume to a comfort level and work up more slowly.

You can find sound tracks of just about anything on YouTube. Just search to find a track that covers what you want to work on, check it out without your dog and then set up a conditioning session.

- Fireworks
- Thunderstorms
- Factory sounds
- Planes
- Trains
- Kitchen appliances
- Vacuum cleaners
- Day care sounds / children at play
- Traffic sounds
- Gunshots
- Military
- Marching bands
- Construction sounds
- Specific tools – air compressors, nail guns, saws, chain saws, riveters....
- Dogs barking – you can encourage your dog not to bark in response to other dogs barking by verbally marking or clicking immediately after a bark – BEFORE your dog has a chance to bark. Repeat with each bark and gradually delay the click.

Once your dog is happy with any particular sound, you can do maintenance work on it by occasionally playing it. It is a good idea to do this with storm sounds before the start of thunderstorm season, and with fireworks for a few days before fireworks. Remember though – this is maintenance – you want to do the initial conditioning long before!