



Excessive Barking

It is perfectly normal and reasonable for dogs to bark from time to time, just as children make noise when they play outside. However, continual barking for long periods of time is a sign that your dog may have a problem that needs to be addressed. Before you try to treat the barking, however, you need to figure out what is causing your dog to do so. Try to determine when your dog is barking, how long he is barking for, and what is setting off the barking behavior. Most likely this will require a little detective work on your part, especially if the barking occurs mostly when you are not home. You may even try asking your neighbors to help record when they hear him barking and any other information they may be able to gather while you are out of the house. Another option is setting up a video recorder or laptop to watch what happens when you leave the home.

Below are several of the most common causes of excessive barking in dogs. Hopefully, with the information you have gathered you will be able to use this guide to identify why your dog has developed this behavior, and the best methods for training him to stop.

Attention Seeking/Boredom/Frustration:

- If he is left alone for a long period of time each day with no interactions with you or other people
- If his environment lacks any mental enrichment for him to entertain himself with, such as toys, food puzzles, Kongs, or playmates.
- If he is a young or very active dog who is not being given an appropriate outlet for his excess energy.
- If he is a particularly intelligent and active type of dog (such as herding or sporting breeds) who needs a “job” in order to be happy and relaxed.

Recommendations

In cases like this, it is important that you expand your dog world and give him more appropriate outlets for his energy, brain, and desire to be with you.

- 1. Walk your dog EVERY day.** This means leaving the yard and taking him out around the neighborhood. This is great exercise for him physically and is also a great form of mental stimulation.
- 2. Have several short training sessions each day.** Teach him fetch with a ball or Frisbee. Teach him basic commands or tricks and practice every day for five or ten minutes. Sign up for an obedience class or agility course.
- 3. Provide your dog with a lot of interesting and varied toys design to stimulate him mentally.**
- 4. If you work long hours and your dog wants your attention, take him to a doggy daycare or have someone come to your house to walk him during the day.** Also, keep him inside when you are not at home or cannot supervise him.

5. Never give your dog the attention he is demanding WHILE he is barking.

This includes yelling at him to “be quiet!” Ignore him until he stops barking for several seconds before you pet, talk, or play with him.

Territorial or Protective Behavior

- Your dog barks at “intruders,” which can be anyone from the mail carrier to people walking by to other animals or people in yards near yours.
- When your dog is barking protectively his posture will be stiff and appear threatening—High tail, ears forward, and teeth may be bared.
- Your dog barks like this when you are out on walks with him and people pass by, not just in the home or on your property.

Recommendations

This type of barking occurs when a dog is barking at people or animals that are close to or attempting to enter an area which he considers his ‘personal space’. They bark in an attempt to protect their personal space from intruders. Most commonly occurs when a dog barks at people walking by the house or the mailman. Territorial barking is difficult to resolve because the behavior (barking) is continuously being reinforced/rewarded (by the person leaving the area when they bark).

- 1. Teach your dog the “quiet” command.** When he barks at someone going by your home, allow a bark or two and then say “quiet” and shake a can of pennies or clap your hands once. The loud noise should startle him into silence. While he is not barking, praise him, tell him he is a good boy and reward him with tasty treats for as long as he remains quiet as the person passes.
- 2. The loud noise is not for punishment, just to get a startle response.** If the loud noise scares your dog, try a toy or other method of interrupting his barking.
- 3. Teach your dog that the people are not intruders, but friends.** Ask someone to help you by walking past your yard, starting far enough away that your dog is not barking. Reward him for staying quiet with treats. As the person approaches, continue to reward your dog while he stays quiet. If he starts to bark, start over. Once the person can come close enough, have them toss the treats or toy to reward your dog for staying quiet and allowing them to approach.
- 4. If he barks inside while your home, have him come to you and distract him with a toy or training until the person leaves.**
- 5. Limit his access to views of people going past while you are not home.** Close the blinds, crate him, or some other way of blocking his view between sessions.

Fearful Behaviors

- Barking at loud noises such as thunder, fireworks, vacuums, etc.
- Posture indicates fear—ears back, tail tucked.

Recommendations

Some dogs are scared of things in their environment, whether it is people, noises, other animals, or inanimate objects. Dogs that bark due to fear often bark while standing perfectly still or backing away (with a tucked tail) from the thing they are scared of. A dog that is barking due to fear will stop barking when they are far enough away from the fear-inducing item that they feel safe.

1. **Identify what is scaring your dog.** You will then be able to work at desensitizing him.
2. **You can help eliminate outside noises.** Leave your dog in a windowless bathroom and leave on the TV or the radio.

Separation Anxiety

- Starts barking only when you are gone, and begins as soon as you leave.
- Also look for other signs of overly strong attachment such as, following you from room to room, frantic greetings when you return, or anxiety that begins when you get ready to leave the house.
- This is sometimes brought on by drastic changes in a dog's routine such as a death in the family, move to a new home, time at a shelter or boarding facility, or a change in your schedule which leaves your dog alone for longer periods of time.

Recommendations

This type of barking has a different tone and pattern than barking, but often occurs in similar circumstances- when they are home alone.

1. **Separation Anxiety can be fixed through a lot of counter conditioning work and desensitization techniques.** It is not an easy fix. We strongly recommend you read additional information about separation anxiety, or consult with a behaviorist for help coming up with a training plan for your dog.

Remember...

Don't Reward the Behavior. If your dog is barking because he wants something, don't give it to him until he is calm and quiet.

AND

Enrich Their Life. Dogs that bark due to boredom need more interaction and excitement in their lives. Take them on a long walk or jog before leaving for the day or provide them with food dispensing toys such as Kong toys.

Anti-bark collars should NEVER be used for problems such as anxiety and fear. Using a collar in these circumstances is inhumane and may make the problem worse. Using anti-bark collars for problems such as boredom is also inhumane—the collar stops the obvious problem but does not relieve the problem for your dog. He needs more social interaction and exercise.