



Barking

Barking is one form of verbal communication in dogs. Barking serves a variety of functions and it is normal for a dog to bark from time to time. It's no fairer to expect a dog to never bark than it is to expect a person to never speak! However, when dogs bark incessantly this can be problematic for both the pet guardian and surrounding neighbors.

Bored and/or Lonely?

Your dog may be barking because they're bored and/or lonely if:

- They're left alone for long periods of time without opportunities for interaction with you.
- Their environment is relatively barren, without playmates or toys.
- They don't have other outlets for their energy.

Recommendations:

- Walk your dog daily – it is good exercise, both mentally and physically.
- Teach your dog to fetch a ball or Frisbee and practice as often as possible.
- Teach your dog a few words and/or tricks and practice them every day for five to ten minutes.
- Take a training class with your dog.
- Provide interesting toys to keep your dog busy when you're not home (Kong-type toys filled with treats). Rotating the toys and changing fillings keeps them interesting.
- If your dog is barking to get your attention, ignore them and instead pay attention to your dog when they are quiet. Make sure they have sufficient time with you on a daily basis, so they don't feel like they have to bark to get your attention.
- Consider doggy daycare or a mid-day dog walk.

Territorial?

Your dog may be barking to guard their territory if:

- The barking occurs in the presence of "intruders," which may include the mail carrier, children walking to school, and other dogs or neighbors in adjacent yards and then stops once they have gone.
- Your dog's posture while they're barking appears threatening - tail held high and ears up and forward.
- They are quiet when no one is around.

Recommendations:

- Desensitize your dog to the stimulus that triggers the barking and teach them that good things happen when these stimuli are around. Have a friend walk by your yard, starting far enough away so that your dog isn't barking, then reward them for quiet behavior. Use a very special food reward such as little pieces of cheese or meat. Then ask the person to slightly decrease the distance. Continue to reward the quiet behavior. It may take many sessions before the person can come close without your dog barking and you might have to go back to the previous distance if he keeps barking. When the person can come closer without your dog barking, have them throw them a treat or a toy.



- When you leave, or can't practice, have your dog in a part of the house where they cannot see the stimulus. If they are crate trained and you are only gone for a short time, put them in the crate with a long lasting, safe chewy. You can also try leaving on music to help mask outdoor noises that may trigger his barking. Keeping them indoors is often the best strategy.

Fear?

Your dog's barking may be a response to something they're afraid of if:

- The barking occurs when they are exposed to something that frightens them (loud noises, such as thunderstorms firecrackers, construction equipment, children, men in hats, strange dogs, etc.)
- Your dog's posture indicates fear - ears back, tail held low.
- Your dog tries to move away from the cause of the fear or if they can't get away (on leash) they may lunge forward in an attempt to keep it from coming closer.

Recommendations:

- Identify what is frightening your dog and desensitize him to it.
- Seek out a way to distance your dog from the thing that scares them. If it's outside noises, give them a safe place to go. You can leave on a television, radio or loud fan. Block off your dog's access to outdoor views that might be causing a fear response, by closing curtains or doors to certain rooms. If you are outside, move across the street or turn and walk quickly away from the scary thing.

Home alone issues?

Your dog may be barking due to home alone issues if:

- The barking occurs only when you're gone and starts as soon as, or shortly after, you leave.
- Your dog displays other behaviors that reflect a strong attachment to you, such as following you from room to room, frantic greetings or whining, drooling, pacing and panting during your preparations to leave.
- Your dog has recently experienced a change in the family's schedule that results in his being left alone more often: a move to a new house, the death or loss of a family member or another family pet, or a stay at an animal shelter or boarding kennel.

Recommendations:

- Contact a certified professional dog trainer and/or and your veterinarian for more advice on how to handle this behavior problem.
- For mild cases, you can teach your dog to do a "down stay" on their favorite "bed" or "place". Give them treats, praise and smile "staying." Always walk back to them to give the treat as we want them to learn how to relax and patiently wait for you to come back. Practice this daily and do NOT leave during the practice sessions. Only when they can stay in that spot while you are out of sight inside the house should you add walking towards the door and then going out the door. Taking baby steps will give you a better result.