



Barking
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Barking is a normal and innate behavior – it is in a dog’s genetic makeup. Barking is how our dogs communicate to us, other people and other animals or objects. Before you try to decrease a dog’s barking, you have to determine why your dog is barking. Here are some common reasons for barking:

Alert – Barking at any noise, object or person that catches their attention or startles them. This can be territorial if it only and always happens at home (this type of barking if left un-addressed can turn into aggression).

Boredom/Loneliness – Barking due to lack of companionship or environmental enrichment– dogs are very social and want to be around people and/or other dogs. Dogs left alone too long – inside or outside.

Greeting/Play – Barking when greeting people or other animals. This is usually a happy bark and is accompanied with tail wags, play bows and jumping.

Anxiety – Barking due to anxiety of some sort, most often associated with separation anxiety.

Demand – Barking *at* you, another person or another animal to get what they want like going outside, play, toy, food and/or affection.

Just Because – Barking just to hear themselves bark (some people do this with talking). Dogs that bark excessively for no apparent reason can fall into this category. It can become a compulsive behavior and graduate to circling or running a fence line repetitively.

Fear/Warning – Barking that is directed at someone or something that the dog perceives as a threat. This is usually accompanied by the showing of teeth, a direct stare, lunging or backing up, pilo-erection (hair standing up) and growling.

Social – Barking in response to other dogs barking.

Dog communication (barking) comes in many different tones, each of which communicates something specific. In general:

Distressed barking – Barking due to isolation or separation anxiety – this is usually high-pitched and repetitive. It will get higher in pitch as the dog becomes more upset.

Boredom barking - Barking due to lack of stimulation or companionship – this is usually a monotone sound that becomes repetitive.

Alert barking – this is usually a sharp staccato sound. If the dog is alarmed there seems to be a note of intensity.

Demand barking – this is usually sharp and persistent and directed at the person or other animal who has or can provide what the dog is wanting.

Fear/Warning – this is usually a low tone and slow, but becomes faster as the threat continues or gets closer.

Greeting/Play – This typically has no rhythm to it and is accompanied by play bows, loose body language, tail wags etc.

Baying – this is an unmistakable sound. It is prolonged barking by hounds either during excitement or in pursuit of prey. Occasionally it can be challenging an intruder.

Howling – a high-pitched elongated sound. This often happens when dogs hear sirens or are significantly distressed. Huskies are known to howl.

Whimpering/Yelping – this is usually an indication that a dog is in pain. The yelp is short and sharp signaling an initial surprise at the pain. Whimpering tends to happen after the initial yelp. If there is repetitive yelping, the pain is usually very strong. This can happen when a dog is startled or scared but not necessarily in pain. Whimpering can also happen when a dog is very excited – like when his owner returns home.

Whining – this is a high-pitched vocalization that is produced nasally with the mouth closed. This happens when a dog wants something, needs to go outside, is frustrated by leash restraint or is separated from a companion or just wants attention.

What not to do:

*Don't yell at your dog – when you yell at your dog you are essentially barking along with him.

*Don't encourage your dog to bark at passing people or things by saying “who's there? Is Daddy home?”

*Never use punishment for barking, especially if your dog is barking out of fear

*Never use a muzzle for managing barking

*Don't hold your dog's muzzle shut or tap his muzzle or chin

*Don't use shock collars or spray collars

*Don't use ultrasonic non-barking machines – they don't work

So.....How do you train your dog to stop barking?

Alert Barking: Whether your dog is telling you someone is at the door, there is a cat outside or a leaf blowing across the yard, constant and continual barking is very frustrating. Teach your dog the “quiet” cue. You can use any word you want like quiet, Shh, enough or thank you. There are 2 different ways to teach this:

3-step process:

1. Teach your dog that “Quiet” equals yummy things.

When your dog is NOT barking, say “quiet” or choose your own command and give your dog a yummy treat – quiet, treat, quiet, treat. Repeat this as often as you can. When you can say “quiet” from another room and he comes running to you knowing he will get a treat, move on to step 2.

2. Teach your dog what “Quiet” means.

Now that your dog associates the word quiet with yummy things, wait until he is barking and say “quiet” and then just wait until he stops barking. Do not repeat the cue. The instant your dog stops barking, say

“good quiet” and give the yummy treat. Do this until as soon as you say “quiet” or give the hand signal, he stops barking.

3. Expect a longer silence.

Once he understands that when you say quiet, he has to stop barking, you start to delay giving the treat. Slowly increase the amount of time your dog has to be quiet before getting the treat. At first it should be just a couple of seconds, and then slowly add a couple of seconds at a time until when you say quiet, he stays quiet. After he is quiet for a few seconds, distract him by encouraging him to play with a toy, do some training or play a game with him.

Speak/Quiet:

Teach your dog to bark on command “speak”. After he knows to bark on cue, ask him to speak, let him bark 2 or 3 times and then stick a tasty treat in front of his nose. When he stops barking to sniff the treat, praise and give the treat. Repeat until he starts barking as soon as you say “speak”.

Once your dog can bark on cue, teach him “quiet”. In a calm environment with no distractions ask him to speak. When he starts barking, say “quiet” and stick the yummy treat in front of his nose. Praise him for being quiet and give the treat. Practice in increasingly distracting environments.

Boredom Barking: This kind of barking occurs when dogs are not receiving enough physical or mental stimulation or being left alone too long. Make sure he has plenty of exercise and a variety of toys that you can rotate on a daily basis. Hiding different toys or treats (prizes) around the back yard or in the house can also keep him busy looking for the next prize. Interactive toys that make noise, have food stuffed in them or can be pushed around for treats to fall out of are all great ways to keep him busy. It is stressful for dogs to be alone in the back yard; dogs are social animals that need our time and attention more than they need space. There is a new product on the market called the Pet Tutor that can be programmed to give out rewards at intervals when your dog is not barking. It is very expensive \$380 - \$450.

Emotional Barking: Most often, this type of barking is related to fear or anxiety. This kind of barking is usually combined with fearful or threatening body language such as the hair standing up, leaning forward, retreating, head lowered, tail between the legs or lunging. This is typical of under-socialized dogs. For young puppies, socialization should help with this, older dogs (and some puppies) may need guidance from a professional dog trainer.

Greeting/Play: This is usually self limiting – the other dog or person plays. If the other person or dog does not play, remove your dog from the situation or try to redirect his attention onto a toy or do some training with food.

Anxiety: If you are present, remove your dog from the situation that is causing the anxiety. If it is separation anxiety the protocol is very complicated and time consuming and should be addressed one-on-one with a professional.

Demand Barking: This happens most often when dogs are not getting enough attention from the owner or want to play a game, go on a walk or get a meal. First, do not reward your dog by giving the attention, food, walk or play until he has stopped barking. Ignore the barking completely (a hard thing to do) and when he has been quiet for 10-15 seconds, reward him by giving him by praising him, asking him to sit and then giving him what he wants/needs. This teaches him that being quiet and sitting is how he gets things, not barking at you incessantly.

Just Because: A tired dog is a good dog! Provide more exercise – physical and mental. Provide more training, games, walks, interactive toys, food puzzles, day care, dog walkers, etc.

Fear/Warning: This is typically short-lived. Remove your dog from this situation.

Social – This is also usually short lived. If you have a neighborhood dog that barks constantly and your dog is barking back, talk to the neighbor and/or take action within the neighborhood to get animal control involved. Close the windows, turn on a fan facing out the window, turn the t.v. up, or teach the quiet cue.

Overall Tips:

*The best time to stop unwanted barking is right before it occurs – if you know your dog is about to bark, distract, train, play and/or reward the quiet.

*Spend time building your relationship! Play lots of games, go to classes with him, practice training cues like come, touch, watch me, go to your spot, stay and tricks.

*When training or trying to modify barking, give your dog your undivided attention.

*You have to invest time and be consistent.

*Patience is key! When ignoring the barking you have to win the competition – no attention until he is quiet.

*Pay attention to the tone of the bark

*Remove your dog from situations that invoke fear, anxiety or aggression.

*Do not force your dog to have social interaction.

*Give your dog enough exercise and mental stimulation including food puzzles.

Training by focusing on good behavior and what you want your dog **to do** instead of what you don't want your dog to do works, is long lasting and fosters the bond between you and your dog. It is important to satisfy your dog's basic needs (food, shelter, medical care, exercise and attention) before trying to modify his behavior.