



Barking Issues

Barking is one of many forms of vocal communication for dogs. People are often pleased that their dog barks, because it either alerts them to the approach of people to their home or tells them there is something that the dog wants or needs. However, sometimes a dog's barking can be excessive. As barking serves a variety of functions, you must identify its cause and your dog's motivation for barking before you can treat a barking problem. Here are some kinds of characteristics that may be shown by your dog and ways to treat each type of barking.

Attention-Seeking Barking

Some dogs bark at people or other animals to gain attention or rewards. Treatment of this kind of barking can be tough, do not reward them for barking, and instead ignore them. Even eye-contact and talking to your dog can count as rewarding their attention. When your dog starts to bark for attention, you can stare at the ceiling, turn away from your dog or walk out of the room. The instant your dog stops barking, ask him to sit and then give him what he wants. Your dog should always be quiet before receiving attention, play or treats.

Greeting Barking

Your dog might be barking in greeting if he barks when he sees people or other dogs. Also his body is relaxed, he's excited and his tail is wagging. This bark also may be accompanied by whining and is similar to the way they bark when family members come home. To reduce their excitement level, teach your dog to sit and stay when meeting people at the door so that he has something to do instead of barking. Also if your dog enjoys toys, keep a favourite toy at the front door to encourage them to pick up the toy instead of barking at your guest.

Compulsive Barking

Some dogs bark excessively in a repetitive way, like a broken record. These dogs often move repetitively as well. If your dog barks repeatedly for long periods of time, apparently at nothing such as shadows, light flashes, mirrors, open doors, you may have a compulsive barker. If your dog also does other repetitive behaviors like spinning, circling or jumping while barking, he may be a compulsive barker.

To help reduce compulsive barking, you can try changing how you confine your dog. For instance, if your dog is tied or tethered, you can switch to keeping him loose in a safe fenced area, or if he's left alone for long periods of time, you should increase exercise, mental stimulation and social contact, by playing tug-a-war, taking them out on long walks, and possibly changing the route you take each time. You can also seek guidance from a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist or a veterinary behaviorist.

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Separation Anxiety Barking

Excessive barking due to separation anxiety occurs only when a dog's caretaker is gone or when the dog is left alone. Other symptoms are pacing, destruction, elimination, depression or other signs of distress. Do not scold or punish your dog. Excessive barking is not the result of disobedience or spite. Your dog displays these behaviors when left alone because he's upset and trying to cope with a great deal of stress. If you punish him, he may become even more upset and the problem could get much worse. Check out our [Separation Anxiety](#) handout for more information.

Territorial Barking

Dogs can bark excessively in response to people, dogs or other animals within or approaching their territories, like your home. Characteristics shown for this type of barking may include a stronger, more firm stance. They may be non-responsive to punishing responses from you, such as scolding or yelling. For treatment of territorial barking, you'll need to block his ability to see people and animals. Removable plastic film or spray-based glass coatings can help to obscure your dog's view and use opaque fencing to surround outside areas. Don't allow your dog to greet people at the front door. Instead, train him to go to an alternate location, like a crate or a mat, and remain quiet until he's invited to greet appropriately.

Distinguishing your dogs barking behaviours will help you figure out the type of barking they may be expressing. These small tips can help manage your dog's behaviour and how frequent they bark, either at strangers or familiar faces.