



Excessive Barking



Dogs bark to communicate. In order to stop excessive or inappropriate barking, you need to figure out what your dog is trying to say.

Only then can you address the issue correctly. However, it is unrealistic to expect a dog to stop barking completely, especially if they are a breed that likes to talk.

What Your Dog is Really Saying

Pay attention to me! Many dogs will bark, whine, or howl to get attention or to get something they want. Often times, people will yell at the dog to “shut up” or “stop barking”. Unfortunately, this actually reinforces the behavior since they got attention (exactly what they wanted).

Yelling at a dog to stop barking doesn't work because the dog just goes, "Cool, now we're both barking!"



To stop the cycle, you have to ignore the barking. Reward him the instant he stops barking by giving a treat or playing with him. Also, make sure to give rewards during quiet times too. This will help reinforce that no bark equals treats.

There's someone in or near my area! Some dogs will bark to protect their territory, even if there is no real threat. Try to limit the dog's ability to see or hear other people or pets. You can use removable plastic film or gloss coating on windows and doors. Use a privacy fence or keep your dog indoors during busy times.

Make your dog sit and stay (quietly) when you answer the door. Give treats to distract and to praise being quiet. Have a friend help with training and give treats as he or she walks by the yard. This way, your dog will associate people near the fence as a source of treats, not something to fear.

Alarm! There's a dog (or person) there! This is similar to the territorial barking, though it can occur while they are not at home, such as walking on a leash. The dogs bark to alert you when something is near you. These dogs are fearful. Dogs that are alarm barking often have a stiffer body language and may move forward slightly as they are barking.

Treatment is similar to the territorial barker. Use treats to distract your dog before they start barking. If they have started barking, have them sit and do tricks for treats to distract them. Again, have a friend help with training by giving treats as he or she walks by you and your dog.

I am so happy to see you!! Dogs that bark and whine when they greet people or other dogs are overly excited and trying to express their joy. The best way to address this is with training of people and your dog. Have guests keep greetings low-key and speak in low tones.

If needed, have them ignore the dog as they first enter the house until the dog has calmed down. To train your dog, have him sit and stay when people come to the door. Give him a toy or treat while he's quiet.



I'm bored! A dog may bark when bored, especially if confined to an area. Usually it's a bark of frustration. Obedience training may help. Exercise is also important so that if left alone, he will be too tired to bark and would rather sleep.

Distraction toys such as Kongs or food puzzles are great for these kinds of barkers. It's hard to bark if their mouth is occupied with peanut butter.

Oh my gosh! You left me! You are never coming back! If your dog only barks when you are gone, he may be suffering from separation anxiety. These dogs become very anxious when their pack leader is gone. They may bark or whine as well as show other signs of separation anxiety such as destruction.

You need to train your dog that you leaving is a good thing. Provide him with food puzzles and other distractions. Separation anxiety can be a challenge and you may need the help of your veterinarian and medications.

I have to bark. I have to bark. I have to bark. Some dogs may show signs of compulsive barking. This involves barking non-stop for no apparent reason. Often, they are displaying other signs of compulsive behavior such as pacing in the house or running back and forth along the fence.

For this dog, try increasing his exercise. Use food puzzles to keep his mind occupied. You may want to try changing his daily schedule often so that nothing becomes repetitive. However, medication may be the best route to help this kind of barker.



A variety of food puzzles

Remember

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your veterinarian will be able to examine your dog to rule out any underlying medical issues and prescribe any needed medicine, especially for anxiety. She will also be able to guide you to a qualified animal behaviorist if needed.

These problems are generally controlled, not cured. It takes patience and persistence to see the results you want. You may not be able to stop the barking completely, but often you will be able to control it enough to live with it.

