

Barking



Barking is one of many forms of vocal communication for dogs. People are often pleased that their dog barks, because it alerts them to the approach of people to their home or it tells them there's something that the dog wants or needs. However, sometimes a dog's barking can be excessive. Because 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

Each type of barking serves a distinct function for a dog, and if he's repeatedly rewarded for his barking—in other words, if it gets him what he wants—he can learn to use barking to his benefit. For example, dogs who successfully bark for attention often go on to bark for other things, like food, play and walks. For this reason, it's important to train your dog to be quiet on cue so that you can stop his attention-related barking and teach him to do another behavior instead—like sit or down—to get what he wants.

Many owners can identify why their dog is barking just by hearing the specific bark. For instance, a dog's bark sounds different when he wants to play as compared to when he wants to come in from the yard. If you want to reduce your dog's barking, it's crucial to determine why he's barking. It will take some time to teach your dog to bark less. Unfortunately, it's just not realistic to expect a quick fix or to expect that your dog will stop barking altogether. (Would you expect a person to suddenly stop talking altogether?) Your goal should be to decrease, rather than eliminate, the amount of barking. Bear in mind that some dogs are more prone to barking than others. In addition, some breeds are known as "barkers," and it can be harder to decrease barking in individuals of these breeds.

Why Dogs Bark

Territorial Barking

Dogs can bark excessively in response to people, dogs or other animals within or approaching their territories. Your dog's territory includes the area surrounding his home and, eventually, anywhere he has explored or associates strongly with you: your car, the route you take during walks and other places where he spends a lot of time.

Alarm Barking

If your dog barks at any and every noise and sight regardless of the context, he's probably alarm barking. Dogs engaged in alarm barking usually have stiffer body language than dogs barking to greet, and they often move or pounce forward an inch or two with each bark. Alarm barking is different than territorial barking in that a dog might alarm bark at sights or sounds in any location at all, not just when he's defending familiar areas, such as your house, yard or car.

Attention-Seeking Barking

Some dogs bark at people or other animals to gain attention or rewards, like food, toys or play.

Greeting Barking

Your dog might be barking in greeting if he barks when he sees people or other dogs and his body is relaxed, he's excited and his tail is wagging. Dogs who bark when greeting people or other animals might also whine.

Compulsive Barking

Some dogs bark excessively in a repetitive way, like a broken record. These dogs often move repetitively as well. For example, a dog who's compulsively barking might run back and forth along the fence in his yard or pace in his home.

Socially Facilitated Barking

Some dogs bark excessively only when they hear other dogs barking. This kind of barking occurs in the social context of hearing other dogs, even at a distance—such as dogs in the neighborhood.

Frustration-Induced Barking

Some dogs bark excessively only when they're placed in a frustrating situation, like when they can't access playmates or when they're confined or tied up so that their movement is restricted.

Other Problems That Can Cause Barking

Illness or Injury

Dogs sometimes bark in response to pain or a painful condition. Before attempting to resolve your dog's barking problem, please have your dog examined by a veterinarian to rule out medical causes.

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. You'll usually see at least one other separation anxiety symptom as well, like pacing, destruction, elimination, depression or other signs of distress. For more information about this problem, please see this article on [Separation Anxiety](#).

Information taken from ASPCA website