

HOW TO MANAGE DOGGY PROBLEMS

Dog Barking Help



DOG BARKING

Dogs, often called “mans best friend”, are wonderful companions and certainly an extremely important member of the family. They give unconditional love and expect nothing in return but your love and attention. Your pet greets you with excitement, a wagging tail and dog kisses whether you have been away for one minute or for many weeks. Research has shown that pets, such as dogs and cats, reduce peoples stress levels and lower their blood pressure. Your dog can amuse and entertain you, keep you from getting bored and turn a bad or boring day into a great one. A dog loves you no matter what you wear or how good or bad you look. They teach their owners about devotion, acceptance and patience and in return, you nurture your pets and care for them. In return owners try to teach their dog’s acceptable behavior to prevent dog behavior problems, such as excessive barking.

HOW DOGS COMMUNICATE

When dogs bark, growl, whine or even howl it is a natural and normal behavior and their way of communicating with each other and with their human families. Starting when they are young puppies they use vocalization to communicate. This may include crying sounds when they are frustrated, afraid, hurt, or soft whining sounds when they are hungry or cold. Older dogs make many different sounds for different situations such as:

- Whimpering or Whining – Dogs often use whining or whimpering as a means of communicating when they seek attention or show submissiveness when greeting other dogs. Many also whine when they are in pain, frustrated, lonely or want something, such as a dog treat or someone to take them for a walk.
- Howling – Many dogs use howling as a long-range means of communicating. If a dog hears another howling in the distance they often howl back as a form of communicating. Some howl when they hear sirens, certain music or go hunting. Hounds and other breeds of dog are notorious for their howling. Sometimes dogs use howling to get attention because they are lonely, unhappy or even bored.
- Growling – As most owners will tell you, dogs growl not only as a warning, to show aggression, dominance and in defense but also when playing. A wagging tail and lots of movement often accompany play growling. You can tell the difference between play and aggressive growling by a dog’s posture; a dog that remains

stationery, snarls or stares is using an aggressive growl and they are serious.

- Dog Barking – Barking dogs and excessive barking are ways dogs communicate. Some breeds are trained to bark, such as working or herding dogs and guard dogs. Although barking is normal behavior often used to get attention show excitement and other emotions, excessive dog barking often creates many problems.

Most dogs have many desirable traits that are beneficial to humans but sometimes they have traits or behavior problems that are undesirable and cause problems for their owners and others. Barking is a natural behavior for dogs and they often use barking to alert their human family when an intruder or a stranger approaches. Startled barking happens when your dog hears a sudden or unfamiliar movement or sound, while others bark when they play and get excited. Many dogs do not like anyone or anything to invade their space so they set off a barking alarm when someone or something, such as a squirrel, cat or even a child steps on or near their property.

EXCESSIVE DOG BARKING

Dog barking turns into a problem when the barking becomes loud, unwanted, inappropriate or excessive. When people hear continuous dog barking, it is not only disruptive but also causes stress and annoyance to you and others, such as neighbors. Nervous, uneasy or lonely barking often happens when you leave your pet home alone and they experience separation anxiety or fear. As your pet becomes more upset, lonely or anxious, the barking gets higher and louder and often even annoys your neighbors. Many dogs think that when you close the door and leave you are never going to return and this starts the continuous, loud barking.

An uninteresting, boring environment that offers no stimulation often creates a bored barker, that makes a lot of noise as an outlet for his or her pent-up energy. Dogs left alone outside or inside for long periods often demonstrate this continuous barking behavior. They are social animals, and when confined alone in a kennel or yard the result is excessive barking because they are bored or lonely and want some attention. Since nobody is there to stop them from barking, it almost becomes a hobby to them. Dogs love to play ball, Frisbee and other games with their owners and often bark when they become excited. Unfortunately, some get too excited and the dog barking turns into a major problem for anyone within hearing distance.

Although the percentage of male and female purebred and mixed breed dogs that bark excessively is the same, some breeds of dog are certainly more vocal than other breeds. Some sporting, herding or working dogs are very active and require a job and lots of physical exercise or stimulation to keep them from barking excessively. Dogs that do not get enough exercise often bark or whine to release tension. Some dogs seem to be very hypersensitive to movements and sounds around them. They bark for almost no reason at all. Often, when a person gets a new puppy and it barks, they yell at them to stop their barking. Unfortunately, a puppy takes this as a sign that you are answering them back so they continue and this eventually turns into excessive barking or inappropriate dog behavior. Sometimes a person unintentionally trains their dog to bark by giving them the attention they want. If your dog barks to go in or out, for a treat, to play ball, for a tummy rub or other reasons, they learn quickly that barking gets results.

METHODS AND TIPS TO STOP EXCESSIVE BARKING

It is completely normal for all dogs to bark occasionally because this is their way of communicating. As a responsible dog owner you want your dog to bark at the appropriate time, such as warning you when someone is at the door but stop when you give the command. Remember that rewarding and praise, not punishment, is the best way to motivate good behavior but you must do this when your dog is exhibiting the right behavior, not after.

Here are a few tips on teaching your dog to stop his or her excessive barking:

- As amazing as it sounds, teaching a dog to speak or bark on command is a simple way to teach them to stop barking. Find something that makes them bark, such as holding their toy or treat away from them. Once they bark, praise them and keep repeating the word 'speak'. When you do this often enough, your dog learns that the word speak means bark and the dog will start barking on command. Now you teach them the word 'stop' or 'quiet'. You do this when they are barking, say the word and give them their treat or toy. When repeated often enough, it does not take long for your dog to figure out that saying the word quiet or stop, means for them to stop barking and they receive a reward. If someone comes into your home and you tell your dog 'quiet' and it stops barking, praise him or her and keep

reinforcing your dog's good behavior.

- The best way to teach your dog to stop barking is by training them well when they are very young.
- There will be times when you must leave your dog alone. To get your pet used to this without barking, start by leaving the house for a few minutes. Never make a fuss of your dog when you leave and after being gone a few minutes, come back in. Again, do not make a fuss of the dog. Gradually increase the time you are away but make it seem very natural so your dog knows you will return. This way they do not feel stressed.
- Some dogs are calmer when they hear a person's voice so leave the radio on low.
- Try to keep your pet away from things that start him barking, such as looking out the window. Close your curtains or blinds and if this doesn't work, give the command 'quiet' or 'stop', then slam a book down or shake a can full of marbles, to make a loud noise. Once he is quiet, have him sit, praise the dog and give it a treat.
- Exercise and mental stimulation are extremely important and help keep dogs from nuisance barking or exhibiting bad dog behavior. Letting your dog out in the yard for a few minutes is not enough exercise. Your pet needs a long walk, brisk exercise or playtime daily, to run off some of his energy and keep his barking controlled. Remember that a tired dog does not bark as much. On a walk, your dog smells and sees different sights, which keeps him from getting bored. Try teaching your dog new tricks or obedience training, as they need mental stimulation to keep them from barking.

DOG BARKING CONTROL COLLARS

If absolutely nothing seems to work and your dogs continuous barking is disrupting not only your life but also your neighbors, you might consider talking to your vet about a bark control collar. There are several different kinds of barking dog collars on the market today.

CITRONELLA BARKING COLLAR

Citronella barking collars are humane, effective and safe to use on your pet. They work by spraying a citronella-scented mist in front of your dogs' nose and they hear the hiss and feel the collar vibrate. When your dog barks, the vibration triggers the citronella collar. Most dogs dislike the smell of citronella while most people find it pleasant. They quickly figure out that when they bark, the offensive odor starts, so it does not take a dog long to stop its excessive barking. Other dogs barking will not set off your dogs' citronella barking collar. Many veterinarians and trainers recommend a citronella collar if needed because they are harmless, non-toxic and natural.

SONIC BARK CONTROL COLLAR

A sonic bark control collar is a light electronic collar that makes a harmless sound that encourages your dog to quit barking. This collar is gentle and humane and corrects the dog by triggering a high-pitched sound when your dog barks without hurting your barking pet. We cannot hear most of the sounds because they are beyond our range of hearing but dogs hear it and find the noise annoying and undesirable. It has an adjustable sensitivity level so you can customize the collar setting.

ELECTRIC BARKING DOG COLLARS

An electric dog collar works by giving the dog a static shock, similar to the one you get from dragging your feet across a carpet and then touching something. It has different progressive levels for correcting a dog, which the vibration from your dogs barking activates. This vibration sends an electronic signal from the collar to your dog. This static shock quickly teaches the dog that barking gives them a shock. Most have progressive levels that get slightly stronger if the dog continues to bark.

Always talk to your veterinarian before using any type of corrective dog barking collar.

A FINAL WORD

When properly exercised, rewarded and trained there are very few dogs that cannot learn to control their barking. It is very important to remember that dogs bark as part of their natural behavior, just like humans speak to communicate. Never try to completely eliminate dog barking from their repertoire, and only use positive training methods to accomplish this.

Most dog owners will be able to curb or prevent problem barking. For those dogs and owners that need a bit of extra guidance and structure to training or corrective training consider speaking to a professional dog trainer in your area. He or she may be willing to work with you one-on-one to help your dog learn to control barking.

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