



Barking

Barking problems are among the most common complaints that dog owners have. Why do dogs bark? Well, for a variety of reasons. Dogs will bark if they feel threatened. They may bark when they play and get excited. Some dogs will bark for attention. Some will bark if they are in pain and they'll even bark when they're lonely, bored or stressed. Certain breeds or breed types are also genetically inclined to bark more than others.

How you'll prevent or resolve your issue with barking will partially depend on what is triggering your dog to bark. For example if your dog is barking or vocalizing because he's in pain, treating the source of his pain would be the obvious solution. If your dog is barking through the front window as dogs pass by your house, blocking off his access to that window is a simple way to help prevent his barking.

Keep in mind that the more your dog practices barking the better he'll get at it. So identifying what is triggering your dog to bark and if all possible, removing the trigger or trying to stop the barking before it occurs is the simplest way to prevent the barking.

Anti-bark collars which use shock are inhumane and are inappropriate for most kinds of barking problems (and often make the problem worse!). With the right kind of help and a strong desire to stop the problem, most pet parents can successfully resolve barking issues in a safe and humane way.

The Alert Barker

If your dog is barking to alert you to someone or something outside, the answer is quite simple. Remove the source of what triggers his barking. For instance if your dog barks at people as they walk past your home, prevent his access to the window using furniture, closing blinds, blocking off the area with a baby gate or confining him to a room or his crate while you aren't at home.

The Lonely Barker

Fortunately the remedy for the lonely barker is often simple. Try changing your dog's environment a bit. Remember that your dog probably wants to be with people. Dogs who are left outside for long periods of time are often the worst offenders of barking. Your dog needs to play with you and feel like he is a part of the family. Dogs typically don't do well when left alone for long periods of time. Make sure you set aside time for regular walks, playtime – even some training sessions. You'll want to be sure that you give him the social contact that he needs to keep his body and mind occupied.

Barking when left alone may also indicate separation anxiety. If you think that anxiety is the source of your dog's barking, contact a professional dog trainer in your area who specializes in working with anxiety. You may also want to work with your veterinarian to see if medication is necessary to help improve your dog's behavior.

Attention Barking

Attention seeking barking is a learned behavior! When your dog brings a toy over to you, drops it on the floor, barks and you pick it up and throw it. You have just taught your dog, "When I bark you play!" Even if you look at him or verbally scold your dog when he barks, you will still be teaching him that his barking is a successful way to get your attention. How can you remedy it? You need to ignore his demands. His barking may initially increase and so don't give in or he will learn that persistence pays off. However, if he barks and you really ignore him or even better if you ignore him and walk away until he is quiet, he will eventually learn that barking doesn't work and it will decrease.

For more information on the Association of Professional Dog Trainers, visit our Web site at www.apdt.com or call 1-800-PET-DOGS (738-3647) or email information@apdt.com.