



Excessive Barking

Barking that is a behavior problem may result from one of several different issues. The key is to first identify the cause of the barking and then to change your dog's triggers.

Loneliness Barking

When loneliness is the cause of incessant barking, giving your dog more attention may solve the problem. In a family situation, encourage family members to take turns playing with your dog and taking him for walks. When he is left alone, provide toys for him to amuse himself.

Sometimes more attention won't solve the problem. If your dog has developed a habit of barking, place some pennies in a can and tape it shut. When he barks, shake the can near him and say "quiet" in a firm voice. The purpose of shaking the can is to startle him. If the barking resumes, shake the can again and say "quiet." Keep the can away from him so he does not consider it a toy. As your dog catches on, your verbal command "quiet" should stop the barking.

If the can does not work, use a squirt bottle to squirt your dog's legs and back accompanied by a firm "quiet" command.

Please remember — any action to deter your dog from barking must be made while he is barking. After-the-fact corrective action only confuses him. Use a strong, firm voice. Avoid yelling, which can be stressful to a dog.

Separation Anxiety Barking

Dogs housed inside who are left alone may suffer from separation anxiety. Some may show their fear and resentment by barking. The ideal way to prevent this problem is to train a puppy to be left alone. Similar training can be applied to an older dog, but more time and patience may be required. Put the puppy in a room by himself. Say "quiet" and leave the room. If the puppy barks, return, say "quiet" and leave again. If the puppy is quiet for a brief period, return and praise him. Extend your time away from the puppy and, upon returning, praise him for being quiet. With an older dog, leaving the house or apartment may be necessary because the dog may pick up your scent and is sensitive to familiar noises.

Territorial Barking

Some dogs bark to protect their territory and a "bark/reward" cycle may be established. A dog who barks at a letter carrier when the mail is delivered is "rewarded" when the letter carrier leaves. This bark/reward may lead him to bark at other service people, neighbors and passersby. If possible, introduce your dog to people who come to the home regularly. Short conversations with delivery or service people, with your dog present, may solve the problem.

Another solution is a firm "no" or "quiet" when your dog begins barking. If he responds by being quiet, praise him briefly. Remember, you have to be present when he is barking to give the "quiet" command.

Other Barking Behaviors

Often a dog will bark in an invitation to play. This is accompanied by body language — tail-wagging, crouching with the head lowered and hindquarters raised. Barking usually stops when play begins or the invitation goes unanswered.

A dog may bark to threaten intruders. This is usually a more menacing bark and may be accompanied by growling. Depending upon the situation, you may need to move the dog to a more secure location or quietly reassure him.

A dog will also bark to warn other dogs or people of danger. The barking generally continues until the source of danger is removed or the dog is taken to safety.

Sometimes pain or illness triggers barking. If a well-behaved dog in his usual environment begins barking or creating other forms of vocalization, a trip to the veterinarian may be in order.

A final thought

As with all aspects of behavior training, consistency is the key to success. Enlisting the cooperation of each family member is important in controlling your dog's barking, as well as in all other aspects of training. Verbal commands and expectations for your dog's behavior must be consistent if you are to be effective.

Desc:

Barking that is a behavior problem may result from one of several different issues. Here's how to identify the cause of the barking and then to change your dog's triggers.