

BARKING

Barking is a normal way for dogs to communicate. A bark from a dog can signal many things. It can mean: "Someone's on my turf", "Stay away from me", "I'm so confused", "Hey! Pet me", "Hey Spot, play with me", "Where's my owner?".

Determine the cause of your dog's barking Defining why your dog barks is the key to managing the situation. Is it directed toward you, another person, another dog or an object?

Correcting your dog's barking problem Just as there are many reasons for your dog's barking, there are multiple solutions for fixing the problem. Use of punishment (including use of shock collars) has NEVER been shown to help fix the problem. Treating the cause of the problem is the key to solving the problem. Listed below are a few common reasons for barking and the possible fixes. Also remember, you can't fix a problem if you are not present.

Attention Seeking Don't give in. If your dog barks and you immediately reach down to pet him/her, or if you go to the door and let her in, you are rewarding him/her for barking by giving him/her what he/she wants. Ignore any attempts to get your attention. Ignoring means: Don't pet him/her. Don't speak to him/her. Don't punish him/her. Don't even look at him/her. Your dog will learn that demanding attention doesn't work.

Fear Barking What often starts off as an insecure "woof" in response to the presence of other dogs or people often escalates into a bigger problem when the owner inadvertently rewards their dog for barking. You reassure your dog by petting him/her and saying, "It's OK, it's just Suzie." You have just praised your dog for being afraid, which increases the likelihood that she will respond in a similar manner next time, and eventually it will escalate. A qualified animal behaviorist can often help to develop a behavior modification plan to help your dog overcome the fear.

Territorial Barking Many owners have problems with their dogs barking in the yard. If a dog barks when he sees someone walking by the house, and the person keeps on walking, the dog thinks he has chased the intruder away. The simple solution is to bring the dog in before he starts barking.

The Warning Bark Often owners want their dogs to bark to alert them that someone is on the property. Teach your dog when to stop by teaching him/her the command QUIET. That way all it takes is a command from you and all will be peaceful again.

Teaching the QUIET command First you have to get your dog to bark. Often the doorbell will do the trick. Once your dog barks, give the QUIET command. The second your dog stops barking, praise him/her and give a treat. Keep increasing the time between the correct response to the QUIET command and the reward. Alternate between praise and a treat as reward. Soon, your dog will stop barking on command.