

Barking

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons as a method of communication. Once you know why your dog is barking, there are two ways to approach the problem (usually a combination of the two is most effective):

- 1. Manage:** Prevent the situation that triggers barking in the first place or prevent your dog's access to the trigger. At the same time, increase your dog's activity level and/or social interactions—tired dogs that have had plenty of companionship throughout the day are less likely to bark. Spaying/neutering your dog often helps too.
- 2. Train:** Teach your dog a mutually exclusive behavior (for example, to be quiet on command).



Alert Barking

Alert barking is rooted in territoriality, barrier frustration, or a combination of the two.

Manage: If your dog barks at doorbells or people passing by outside, limit your dog's access to windows that face sidewalks or streets, and limit access to the front door. Leave the radio or television on to cover noises from outside.

If your dog barks at other dogs while on leash, avoid areas with many dogs and be sure to reward good walking manners.

You can often reduce the level of your dog's alert barking by increasing the amount of exercise and stimulation she gets. Invite people and dogs over to socialize and help her get used to a wider range of sights and sounds.

Train: For barking at doorbells, the common training technique is to teach your dog a behavior like fetching a certain toy or doing a "Down-Stay" on a mat for a tasty treat.



Attention-Seeking Barking

This is your dog's way of communicating that she wants something (attention, play, food) right now.

Manage: More exercise, more playtime, and plenty of social interactions can reduce attention-seeking barking.

Train: Do not reward barking with what your dog wants: attention, door-opening, ball-throwing, releasing from the crate. Let her out of the crate only when she's quiet. Ignore her when she barks. Keep in mind that if you've been rewarding barking for a while, it will take some time to correct because she's used getting what she wants.

The important flipside to this is to pay attention to your dog when she's quiet. Teach her that sitting or laying quietly, chewing on a chew toy, and not barking are behaviors that get rewarded.

Fear/Alarm Barking

When your dog is unsure or uncomfortable, this is her way of saying "I'm scared! Don't come any closer!" She hasn't been exposed to these things before or has come to associate them with bad things.

Manage: Avoid the trigger: Choose quiet streets or open spaces for your dog's exercise. Put your dog away in a room or crate when visitors come over.

Train: Teach your dog that the scary thing is associated with yummy food. Bring treats on walks and keep enough distance from the scary thing that your dog will eat the treats while passing it, then work to gradually get closer. Re-socialization is key.

Loneliness/Boredom Barking

Dogs that bark when they're lonely or bored are not having their daily needs for companionship, exercise, and social stimulation met.

Manage: Find ways to meet your dog's needs. Make sure she is getting plenty of exercise; for some dogs, a walk around the block twice a day isn't enough.

If she is an outdoor dog, make sure she is still getting lots of attention and interaction time with humans. You could take your dog to doggy daycare once or more a week for play time.

Make sure there are plenty of toys to keep her busy while you're gone too!

Anxious Barking

If your dog barks and whines when left alone and you have ruled out other causes for barking, it may be anxiety. See information on separation anxiety.