

# Barking Behavior

---



Barking is a natural reaction to stimuli. However, excessive barking can cause problems for some pet owners. Those individuals who live in close proximity to their neighbors, who need quiet or become frustrated with prolonged barking spurts may benefit from the tips below. These tips include information on understanding why your dog barks, how to minimize the stimuli and how to train your pet not to bark.

When determining how to train your dog not to bark, it is important to find the underlying cause of the noise. Barking is a normal occurrence in a dog's life. It is a form of communication and warning to other members of its pack or family. Therefore, some dogs vocalize to signal various meanings to other dogs. There are, however, many other reasons for your pet to bark. For instance, some dogs bark out of anxiety and insecurity, frustration from being confined, boredom, as an attention seeking mechanism or to indicate a medical problem. It is important that as a puppy, your pet is properly socialized. Early positive introductions to many different people, places, noises and stimuli will prevent your pet from barking out of anxiety or fear later in life.

Unwanted barking can be prevented by determining the underlying cause, eliminating or minimizing those factors and training your pet for appropriate behaviors. When determining the underlying cause of your pet's unwanted barking, analyze the times of day your pet barks, determine external stimuli that promote barking episodes and review your actions for accidental reinforcement of the behavior. Look for a pattern or link that will allow you to successfully re-train your pet's behavior.

Once you have determined a pattern to your pet's behavior, try to eliminate the stimuli that cause barking. If your pet barks out of separation anxiety, then perhaps crating your pet to provide a smaller, more secure environment would be beneficial. Be sure to follow proper crate training techniques so that the crate will be viewed by your pet as a safe haven and not as a punishment. If your pet barks out of boredom, try to increase positive stimuli such as exercise, interaction and new toys. Be sure to review your own behavior when your pet barks. Some owners accidentally reinforce their pet's unwanted behavior by trying to distract their pet while barking with treats or toys. These actions only reinforce that barking brings good things from the owner. Also, check your body language and noise level in response to your pet's barking. An aggressive, loud response from you to his barking may only aggravate the issue and lead to more barking.

If excessive barking still occurs, even after eliminating the stimuli, it may be necessary to use different training techniques to quiet your pet. Some animals can be trained to respond to a quiet command. When training your pet to obey a quiet command, it is important to remember that your pet must associate the command with an action. Therefore, in order to train quiet, it may also be necessary to train your pet to speak or bark on command. Begin by finding a stimuli that will illicit a bark from your pet. Each time your pet barks, give the speak command and a treat reward. Once the animal has mastered this command, add the quiet command after the bark, when the animal is silent. Be sure to reward your pet lavishly with both praise and a treat reward. Once your pet has mastered these new tricks, begin to practice them in different scenarios that may have previously caused uncontrollable barking. For example, if the doorbell would normally elicit a barking episode, practice the commands after ringing the doorbell. With practice, your pet will learn to be quiet on command.

Training your pet to a quiet command is very useful when you are present. However, if your pet tends to exhibit its excessive barking behavior when you are not present, then you may need to utilize a remote anti-barking device. These devices range from water sprayers and collars with citronella sprays to audible alarms that activate each time the animal barks. Each of these items do not injure your pet, but most pets find them unpleasant. Your pet will soon associate the unwanted barking with the unpleasant noise, water or spray and cease or limit its barking behavior.