

## Excessive Barking in Dogs

### *Barking and your dog*

Every dog barks. Even the [Basenji](#), “the barkless dog”, can make some noise akin to a bark (though it's more like a yodel). Essentially, barking is a dog's version of talking. They bark to say hello, to say they want something – “Feed me!” – and also to let you know if something's going on or when they don't like something.

That said, some of our furry buddies are loud mouths and just love to hear themselves bark all the time. That kind of barking becomes annoying and stressful for the people and other pets in your house. Expecting a dog to never bark is like asking a person to never talk. In fact, trying to quiet a dog's normal barking can be extremely stressful and confusing for the dog. Imagine if someone shushed you every time you asked for food or when you needed something or put a piece of tape over your mouth so you couldn't talk!

### **Barking: What's normal and what's annoying?**

Good barking is pretty easy to identify:

- When people come into your dog's space, knock on the door, drive into your driveway, etc.
- Reaction to loud or unusual noises (horns honking outside, thunder, or construction noise)
- Asking to go out or telling you, “hey, I'm hungry.”
- A perception on your dog's part that any member of his family is nervous, afraid, or in harm

Nuisance barking is also usually pretty easy to spot:

- “I'm barking simply because I like the sound of my own voice and I'm not going to stop anytime soon.”
- Barking when wanting attention of any sort – “you're not paying attention to me, so I'm going to bark,” “you left the room, so I'm going to bark,” and “you're talking to your husband, I'm going to bark.”
- Barking because someone else barks and getting the entire pack into a barking frenzy

If your dog exhibits “good barking” tendencies and it

doesn't cause problems within your home, we actually don't recommend discouraging it. In fact, alert barking can be a good thing, as can reasonable “request barking” (i.e., I need or want something). To ensure your dog's alert or request barking stays in control, acknowledge it by going to your dog, making physical contact with a stroke on the head or back, and say “good dog.” This will your dog know that you heard and that he or she doesn't need to bark again.

If your dog nuisance barks, you should try to curb this behavior as soon as possible. The longer your dog does it, the harder it will be to stop.

Try to assess why your dog is barking. If it's for an undesirable reason, catch him or her in the act and use a firm command like “no bark.” When the barking stops and your dog relaxes, shower him or her with praise.

If your dog gets caught up in the act of barking (sometimes dogs can really go into something like a trance when they bark), go to him or her and gently make physical contact so he or she pays attention (stroking your dog on the on the head, tapping on the shoulder) and then use the “no bark” command.

If your dog is a chronic and persistent barker, you can give your veterinarian a call and enlist some help. Also, a professional trainer might be able to give you some great suggestions specific to your dog and your environment.

Don't punish your dog for barking. Even if it's nuisance barking, it's natural and your dog won't understand why you're punishing him or her for just being a dog. Always remember: stay calm, be patient, and show your dog lots of love.

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*