



STOP THE BARKING TIP SHEET

Keep In Mind, Barking is Normal Healthy Canine Behaviour!

Barking is communication. Your dog is expressing his/her feelings. It is imperative you listen to the message. Dogs bark for a reason. Understanding why a dog is barking is crucial to solving a barking problem, if indeed there is a problem. Sometimes when people find barking an unacceptable behaviour, they find other normal canine behaviours unacceptable as well. Viewing barking, digging, jumping and other innate canine behaviours as disorders do not make for happy dogs or owners. Attending to an animal's needs can be time consuming, inconvenient and difficult but that is the nature of taking on the care of a sentient being. Becoming frustrated is understandable but can lead to poor decisions and the use of aversive tools such as shock collars.

Don't despair. There are solutions. Find the reason for the barking & you will likely find the solution. To help decipher the meaning behind the barking look for clues in your dog's posture, pitch and cadence of bark. Know your dog. Folks who are very attentive to their pets are often accused of coddling them. Don't buy it. A dog's feelings & needs deserve to be attended to. Some barking problems can be resolved with little effort, such as small changes in their environment, while for others the solution can be elusive. In difficult cases seek help from a vet behaviourist.

Here are some common reasons your dog may be barking:

- Lack of socialization and attention
- Lack of exercise & mental stimulation
- Significant changes in environment
- Stress
- Hunger
- Fear / Separation anxiety
- Pain
- Stranger alerting
- Happiness, excitement, greeting
- Boredom
- Guarding / territorial barking
- Being isolated & excluded from family gatherings
- Medical issues
- A breed characteristic
- A learned habit from another dog

It may be as simple as your dog is looking for acknowledgement. If so, give it to him. Show an interest in what he is barking at by standing next to your dog. Let him bark for a few seconds. Then tell him it's ok, that's enough, & praise him for stopping. It's amazing how often this acknowledgement is all they want.

For dogs that have never been left alone and now must start, this will likely be a high anxiety experience for them. Try leaving your dog alone for very short periods (10 seconds to 10 minutes). Build slowly. Once they understand you are coming back their anxiety will (hopefully) lessen with each occurrence. For dogs suffering full-blown separation anxiety you will likely need the professional help of a vet behaviourist. Animal's left in crates and in small spaces, with no food or water, suffer deep anxiety and physical discomfort. Getting rid of the crate is a quick fix for many. Ample room to move freely can work wonders to reduce discomfort, stress and barking. Dogs left longer than 3 or 4 hours must be able to relieve themselves. Have a family member or friend look in on them and take them for a walk.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS TO TRY

GENERAL BARKING

- Seek to understand the underlying reason for the barking
- Play with your dog and give him undivided attention.
- Provide mental stimulation through games, socializing activities with people and other dogs.

- Teach a clear consistent signal to communicate you want barking to stop; a firm “shoosh” or “quiet”.
- Shoosh and praise liberally when they do.

BARKING WHEN HOME ALONE

- Send your dog to daycare for a couple of days a week. Remember, daycare is not for every dog.
- Arrange for someone to visit or walk your dog to provide breaks.
- Exercise your dog before leaving them alone.
- Keep a radio or TV playing.
- Do not crate, instead give adequate space for movement and stretching. Avoid leaving your dog for extended periods of time.
- Make sure your dog is fed and has access to fresh water and safe toys before you leave.
- Restricting their views to outdoors can help for some. Yet for others allowing a view of the outside eases boredom and removes some of the stress of not knowing who or what is causing a noise. Watching the world go by can help them occupy their time.
- Create a [life size stuffed dummy](#) attired in your clothing to fill in when you go out.
- For severely anxious dogs consult with a vet behaviourist.

BARKING WHILE IN THE YARD

- Don't leave your dog feeling vulnerable to threats by tying or chaining him.
- When your dog barks to come inside, bring your dog inside.
- Provide plenty of space & a comfortable clean dry shelter.
- Don't leave your dog hungry & without fresh water.
- Provide safe toys.
- Limit the time outside and never in hot or inclement weather
- Never leave your pets outside during thunderstorms or fireworks.

BARKING AT PEOPLE AND ANIMALS WHEN IN PUBLIC AND ON WALKS

- Burn off your dog's energy with play and exercise before taking him to public places.
- Keep a vigilant lookout so you can distance from the catalyst before the barking starts.
- If the barking is to greet, have your dog wait quietly then reward with a greet.
- Don't punish. Use a calm voice and move away from the trigger.
- Don't forget to reward & praise when your dog doesn't bark.
- Allow your dog off leash free time whenever possible.
- Safely introduce your dog to as many people and situations as possible without using force.
- Seek Professional help.

Modifying your dog's behaviour will take patience, repetition, praise, rewards, desensitization, insight and understanding of your dog's feelings and body language. What it does NOT call for is an anti-bark shock collar!

If barking persists a medical check up may bring to light a physical or mental issue. Your vet may also recommend a behaviourist or credentialed dog trainer. The training industry is unregulated so before allowing anyone access to your dog, do your own research. Your vet may not be aware a trainer uses shock collars and other aversive methods. Some trainers will conceal this fact. Humane solutions do not include cutting vocal cords (cordectomy), shock collars, prong or choke collars. These options are dangerous, inhumane and rife with complications. Citronella spray collars can also be stressful, traumatizing and highly irritating. Dogs, like children, go through stages of development and learning so you will find that behaviours can present, evolve or cease at any time. Being prepared to endure with a patient kind heart will bring you the most success.