

## Barking

### What is, why does it happen, and how can we change it?

Dogs communicate through their body language and vocalization. Barking is a type of vocalization that is natural for the dog to do, but sometimes can lead to problems for their pet parents. To decrease the unwanted or excessive barking, we need to look at why the dog may be doing it.

Many dogs are bred to “sound the alarm,” usually for hunting or protection purposes. So, we should always take this into consideration and must understand it’s unfair to punish them for vocalization that is completely instinctual. Below are some of the reasons why dogs bark.



#### **Demand barking**

This is when your dog has learned that they get what they want through whining or barking.

#### **Greeting and excitement barking**

Dogs can get quite excited when greeting people or dogs and may vocalize this through barking.

#### **Play barking**

Dogs that really enjoy playing with other dogs or their owners are having fun and can start to bark out of excitement.

#### **Barking induced by barrier frustration**

Dogs that are behind a barrier, such as a fence, window or baby gate, may get frustrated by not being able to greet people or other dogs when they walk by and will express their frustration by barking.

#### **Alert barking**

This one is the most common. It happens when your dog senses something by hearing or seeing something that is not normal to them and they will let you know by barking.

#### **Fear barking**

Dogs that find certain stimuli frightening may feel stressed and respond by barking.

Keep in mind that these are only a few in a long list. In order to correct unwanted barking, we need to get to the root of the issue. If we attempt to “correct” this behaviour through punishment, we merely treat the symptom of what could be a larger problem.



### **The quiet cue**

Teaching a “quiet” cue is one way to help reduce and even sometimes eliminate unwanted barking. To do so, approach your barking dog in a calm manner and say “quiet.” Once they have stopped barking, immediately deliver high-value treats to them, such as pieces of hot dog, chicken or cheese. Once your dog understands the quiet cue, you can begin to say “quiet” after they stop barking and wait a few seconds before delivering the treats. You can continue to increase the duration between the stopping of barking and the treat delivery over time. This type of training should be done frequently throughout the day and weeks. If your dog is beginning to understand the quiet cue, you’ll notice that they will stop barking once you say “quiet.”

