



Jasper County Animal Rescue League and Humane Society  
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## BARKING

Barking is one of the most common complaints of dog owners and their neighbors! Occasional barking is natural. Continuous barking for long periods of time is an indication of a problem that needs to be addressed.

### **Why does my dog bark constantly?**

There are many reasons a dog can have a barking problems. Listed below are just a few:

- Boredom – Dogs left alone for long periods of time with little or nothing to do may decide that barking is their “job”. This is seen a great deal in dogs left outside during the day while their owners are away at work.
- Territorial – Dogs that are left alone for long periods with little or nothing to do may decide that protecting their territory is their “job”. They bark to ward off “intruders” like the mailman, children walking by, or other animals that come near the dog’s perceived territory. This is a vicious cycle because the intruder usually goes away anyhow, but the dog thinks the intruder left because of the barking.
- Fear – Dogs that are uncertain around unfamiliar people, objects, or noises may bark to make the stimulus go away. This can be distinguished from territorially barking by the dog’s body posture. Fearful dogs keep their tails low and ears back.
- Separation Anxiety – The barking occurs only when you leave and the barking starts within 20 minutes of your departure. Dogs will also display other signs of separation anxiety like following you from room to room, frantic greetings, and acting anxious when you get ready to leave.
- Attention Getting –The dog is barking to get attention from you. The attention can be in the form of play, food, petting or scolding.

### **What can I do?**

First determine why your dog is barking. Since the barking often occurs when you are not at home, you may have to do a little investigative work like setting up a video recorder or asking for a friend or neighbor’s help. Once you have discovered why your dog is barking, follow the appropriate recommendations below:

## Boredom

- Take your dog to a dog daycare a few times a week to break up the routine.
- Provide your dog with busy toys to occupy him or her while you are gone.
- Increase your dog's people time by spending at least 20 minutes twice a day playing fetch or hide and seek with your dog.
- Walk your dog daily. This is a good way to exert physical and mental energy for both of you.
- Take an obedience class with your dog and spend a few minutes practicing new commands every day.
- Consider crate training the dog so you can leave the dog when you can't supervise him or her while you are working on the problem.

## Territorial

- Teach your dog the quiet command. When your dog is barking say "quiet" and interrupt the barking with a shake can (an aluminium can with pennies) or a squirt of vinegar water. Once the dog is quiet, praise and reward him or her with a tasty treat. You can also use a head halter to teach the quiet command. (See Using a Head Halter handout).
- Work on desensitizing the dog to intruders. Teach the dog that good things come from people. Start by having someone walk by at a distance where the dog is quiet. Reward his quiet behavior with a great treat. Ask him to do some commands and gradually have the "intruder" come closer. Continue to reward quiet behavior. Have the intruder give the dog a treat as long as the dog is quiet. It may take several weeks to get to this point.
- If the dog barks while inside, call the dog to you and give the dog a cue for a sit or a down. Reward the dog for obeying the cue.
- Have the dog spayed or neutered to decrease territorial behavior.
- Consider crate training the dog so you can leave the dog inside when you can't supervise him or while you are working on the problem.
- Do not encourage the dog to bark at strangers or noises by saying, "what's that", "get um" or any similar phrases.

## Separation Anxiety

- See the APSCA link at <http://www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-articles/separation-anxiety>

## Attention Getting

- Teach your dog the quiet command. When your dog is barking say "quiet" and interrupt the barking with a shake can (an aluminium can with pennies) or a squirt of vinegar water. Once the dog is quiet, praise and reward him with a tasty treat. You can also use a head halter to teach the quiet command. (See Using a Head Halter handout).
- Don't reward barking behavior by giving attention. Food, petting, or even scolding are all considered forms of attention.
- Schedule at least 20 minutes of people time twice a day for interactive play like fetch or hide and seek.
- Walk your dog daily. This is a good way to exert physical and mental energy for both of you.
- Take an obedience class with your dog and spend a few minutes practicing new commands every day.

## **Should I punish my dog when he or she keeps barking?**

Punishment is seldom effective in the control and correction of barking problems. Excessive levels of punishment can increase anxiety and further aggravate many forms of barking, while mild punishment merely rewards the behavior by providing attention.

## **What anti-barking devices are there and are they effective?**

**Owner-Activated Products:** These products are most useful for interrupting the barking during quiet command training. Ultrasonic devices (Pet Agree™, Easy Trainer™), audible devices (Barker Breaker™, rape alarms), water sprayers, or a shake can are often successful. Without rewarding the quiet behavior many dogs will soon begin to ignore the devices.

**Bark-activated collars** are useful when barking occurs in the owner's absence. Audible and ultrasonic training collars are occasionally effective, but they are neither sufficiently unpleasant nor consistent enough to be a reliable deterrent. The Premier Direct Stop citronella collar emits a spray of citronella each time the dog barks and is sufficiently unpleasant to deter most dogs. Although these devices may be effective in the owner's absence, they have their most lasting effects when the owner is present to supervise and retrain. As soon as the barking ceases, the owner should redirect and encourage the dog to perform an enjoyable alternative behavior (play, tummy rub) as long as the dog remains quiet. Products that use electronic stimulation (shock collars) may be successful. However, since there is the potential for injury with any shock device, we do not recommend them.

It is important to note that, bark collars only work when they are on the dog. Most dogs will learn to distinguish when the collar is on. When they are not wearing the collar, most dogs will bark. Bark collars address the symptom but not the problem (why the dog is barking). Without addressing the problem, other symptoms may begin like digging or escaping. The use of the collar should be in conjunction with the recommendations listed above. Do not use collars on dogs that are fearful or that may be suffering from separation anxiety. This will only make the problem worse.