

BARKING

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons.

- **Watchdog barking** serves the dual purpose of alerting members that there is an intruder and warning the intruder that they have been noticed.
- **Demand barking** is the dog's way of communicating to the owner that they would like something immediately. Typical requests are "open the door now," "pay attention to me now," "let me out of here now," "I want to see that dog now" etc.
- **Spooky barking** occurs when the dog is uncomfortable about something in the environment and barks to say "I'm dangerous! Don't come any closer!"
- **Boredom barking** can result when the dog's daily needs for exercise and social stimulation are not met. The dog is frustrated and expresses this by barking as well as filling the boring environment with sound.

Watchdog Barking

To cut down on watchdog barking, you're going to have to teach and reinforce a competing or alternate response to triggers that result in your dog barking. Replacement behaviors can be fetching a certain toy or doing a down-stay on a mat. Teach and practice the replacement behavior until dog responds correctly 90 percent of the time in the absence of the dogs' trigger. Once the behavior is strong in an environment with no triggers for barking, incorporate the replacement game or cue into real-life situations with the dog's trigger for barking: someone walking by door, by a window, opening the door, etc. (You may need to use other dog handlers to set up these situations.)

- After a few barks, warn the dog to be quiet ("Quiet please").
- On the very next bark, mark the behavior ("Oh! Too bad for you!") and immediately impose a timeout — put them behind a door or in crate for two to three minutes or until your dog calms down.
- With repetition, your dog will learn that it is their barking that is producing the timeout, and they will start heeding the warning.
- If your dog does their go-to-mat, reward them as usual, but if they bark, put them into time out.
- Your dog may need some coaching and prompting the first few times in the real-life situation. If necessary, do some brainstorming and make the exercise easier so your dog can be successful.

Demand Barking

When they want something, dogs will experiment with various behaviors to see if any of them work, and they quickly find that barking works very well. If you don't like demand

barking, stop rewarding it with any kind of attention: door-opening services, releasing from crates, etc. Period. No butts.

- Don't provide door-opening services to barking dogs.
- Don't let a barking dog out of a crate until they quiet down.
- Ignore dogs who bark at you.
- If your dog has been rewarded in the past for barking (they got what they wanted), be aware that the barking may get worse before it goes away.
 - You're changing the rules and the dog will be frustrated at first.
 - Whatever you do, do not give in and reward the barking when it gets worse.
- Start noticing the dog when they're quiet and teach them the payoffs of lying quietly. Giving the dog a chew or a toy should help refraining them from barking.

Spooky Barking

Spooky barking can be due to under-socialization or other fear-related issues. You're going to have to change your dog's association with whatever is causing the barking from something spooky to something positive.

- Have your dog work for their food.
- If your dog doesn't like strangers, meals need to be fed bit by bit around strangers until they improve. It takes a while to improve adult dogs, so keep at it.
- Always keep the dog under threshold while working to change their association from bad to good. This means, if your dog barks at the spooky thing, whatever it is, you are too close to it or it is too intense. Back away and start treating at a distance where the dog can barely see or hear the spooky thing without barking. Start treating there, and over time you can get closer as you treat.

This process is called *classical counterconditioning*, and it takes time and patience. Don't rush the process, and be sure to honor your dog's signals of discomfort as best you can. If barking erupts, you are moving too quickly or are too close to the spooky thing for the dog's comfort.

Boredom Barking

Dogs are not space-intensive; they are time-intensive. As such, there is no quick fix for boredom barking. You must meet your dog's basic needs for stimulation, exercise and companionship.