



## Do you own a dog that barks?

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Barking is a natural behaviour for dogs; it is one way they communicate. But excessive barking is often a sign that something is 'wrong'. The first step in solving the problem is to determine why your dog is barking.

Reasons why your dog may bark:

- It may be bored, lonely or frustrated due to a lack of company, exercise, or mental stimulation.
- If left in the backyard for long periods, barking may be an enjoyable way for dogs to pass the time.
- Dogs are also social pack animals, and many breeds do suffer from anxiety when alone.
- Dogs bark to seek attention, especially when they are bored or lonely, and even though their barking may result in scolding, dogs may still prefer negative attention to no attention at all.
- To alert or warn you of something it thinks might be a threat. This could include barking at animals, the postman, noises, or the movement of people or vehicles outside your property.
- Some dog breeds may be more inclined to bark as its part of their instinct to guard or defend.
- Due to fear (eg of thunder, fireworks, or other loud noises).
- Due to medical reasons (eg fleas, allergy, or illness).
- Due to physical reasons (eg if hot, cold, hungry or thirsty).

## Possible Solutions

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Depending on why your dog is barking, you may need to:

- Take the dog on more frequent walks (once or twice daily) and include it on family outings.
- Even if you have a large yard, dogs still need to socialise and experience the sounds and smells of walks outside.
- Make the dog's backyard environment more interesting, provide the dog with toys and a large raw marrow bone to chew. You can also stuff hollow (indestructible) toys with food.
- Ensure the dog has fresh water, a balanced diet, and adequate shelter from weather extremes. If possible, give the dog access to the house through a dog door.
- If the dog is barking at passers-by, block its view of movement outside the property with solid fencing, shade cloth or hedging.
- Alternatively, if the source of provocation is a human (eg children teasing the dog), try to discuss the problem with them.
- Always make sure your dog is in good health, by taking it to the vet for regular check ups.
- Undertake dog training – the approach taken will depend on the reason for barking.

The only way to resolve barking issues is by taking the time to identify and understand why it's occurring, and it is the owners responsibility to implement steps and strategies to prevent it.