

BARKING

Kinds of barking.

Barking generally falls into five categories. To cut down on any kind of barking, give your dog plenty of exercise and arrange for mental stimulation when he is left alone. Feed him using puzzle toys or stuffed Kongs.

Boredom barking happens when a dog is left alone often and doesn't get enough exercise or mental stimulation. Dogs are like kids. If you don't give them something fun to do, they entertain themselves—often in ways we don't appreciate. So, step up the doggie workouts and get out the puzzles.

Separation anxiety barking is characterized by constant home-alone barking usually coupled with other behaviors such as house soiling, visible anxiety upon departure and arrival, and destruction around doors and windows. In this case, barking is a symptom of the underlying anxiety, which is what needs to be addressed. Call us right away if you think your dog suffers from separation anxiety.

Barrier frustration barking often comes with posturing such as snarling or baring of teeth. The three most common occurrences are: Dogs left in a backyard too long, dogs in cars, or dogs on leash that would be perfectly comfortable with whatever they are barking at (most often other dogs) if they were off leash.

With very social dogs, more time spent playing with other dogs and less time spent behind a barrier will greatly improve the problem. Not-so-social dogs first need to learn to enjoy other dogs. In the meantime, avoid unsupervised time in the yard or car.

In either case, always give your dog a treat when he sees another dog but can't say hi.

Demand barking occurs in dogs that have learned that barking gets them what they want—balls thrown, doors opened, dinner, or attention. To curb demand barking, immediately stop rewarding the barking: Ignore your dog or walk away when he barks. Pick times when he is quiet, tell him "Nice quiet," and pet or treat him. If your dog barks when you work at the computer or talk on the phone, preempt his behavior. Settle him in his crate or on his bed with a toy or stuffed Kong before you sit down to work.

Watchdog barking is triggered by sights and sounds such as passersby, slamming car doors, or a cat on the lawn. Watchdog barkers were sentries in a previous life. Teach your dog to respond to noises by getting a toy or barking once, then coming to find you. Keep blinds closed and don't put your dog's bed or his confinement area anywhere near a window or bay door. Crating your dog can be a great way to signal to him that he can take time off from his patrol duties.