



DOG FACTS



“BARK! BARK! BARK!”

Barking is the result of either anxiety or your dog being pre-genetically disposed to barking, like hounds. If you own a breed that is known to bark, then work on teaching your dog the “quiet” command (see below), provide plenty of outlets, and provide toys to keep them busy.

Anxiety-related barking, especially if it is a new behavior, may be the result of an underlying medical issue, so the first thing you should do is take your dog to the vet. If everything checks out medically, the second thing you need to do is determine when your dog barks, for how long your dog barks, and what is causing him to bark. If your dog barks when you are not home, ask your neighbors, drive or walk around the block then watch and listen for a while, or start a tape recorder or video camera when you leave for work. Hopefully you will be able to discover which of the following anxiety related problems is the cause of your dog's barking.

Social Isolation / Attention Seeking

Your dog may be barking because he's bored and lonely if:

- He's left alone for long periods of time without opportunities for interaction with you.
- His environment is relatively barren, without playmates or toys.
- He's a puppy or adolescent (under 3 years old) and does not have other outlets for his energy.
- He's a particularly active type a dog (like the herding or sporting breeds) who needs “job” to be happy.

Recommendations

Expand your dog's world and increase his “people time” in the following ways:

- Walk your dog daily – it's good exercise for both of you.
- Teach your dog to fetch a ball or Frisbee and practice with him as often as possible.
- Teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks and practice them every day for five to 10 minutes.
- Take an obedience class with your dog.
- Provide interesting toys to keep your dog busy when you're not home (Kong-type toys filled with treats or busy-box toys). Also rotating the toys makes them seem new and interesting (see our *handout: “Dog Toys and How to Use Them”*).

- If your dog is barking to get your attention, make sure he has sufficient time with you on a daily basis (petting, grooming, playing, and exercising), so he doesn't have to resort to misbehaving to get your attention.
- Keep your dog inside when you're unable to supervise him.
- Take your dog to work with you every now and then, if possible.
- If you work very long hours, take him to a doggie daycare or have a friend or neighbor walk and/or play with him.
- Never give your dog attention while he is barking. Ignore him until he stops for at least three seconds, then reward with attention or treats. Frustration/Learned Your dog may be barking due to frustration or as a learned behavior if:
 - The barking occurs in the presence of “strangers” seen through the window and/or fence or when on leash. It may include the mail carrier, children walking to and from school, and other dogs or neighbors in adjacent yards.
 - Your dog's posture while he's barking appears threatening – tail held high and ears up and forward.
 - You've encouraged your dog to be responsive to people and noises outside.