

When the new Puppy Becomes a Pest: How to Stop Dog Barking

Everyone in the (Woof!) family really (Woof!) loves the new pup-(Woof!)-py. It's cute (Woof!) and (Woof!) cuddly, friendly (Woof!), and great (Woof!) with the kids (Woof! Woof! Woof!). **But why won't it stop barking!!**

Uncontrolled, excessive barking is a pretty common problem with both puppies and adult dogs, and surveys indicate that roughly a third of all dog owners experience this problem with their pets. Common problem or not, though, if it's your dog that's exhibiting this behavior, it can really be a major disruption to your life (and your neighbors!).

Fortunately, there are ways to minimize or eliminate this problem, but it might help to first understand why dogs bark.

Barking, of course, is the primary means of communication for dogs. When a dog is barking, it has a reason for doing so, even though that reason may be incomprehensible to humans. The barking may be due to hunger, loneliness, boredom, excitement, or, for an indoor dog, may indicate an urgent need to go outside (which you will definitely want to oblige!).

The barking may also be an alert to possible danger, or it may be a means of seeking attention. It's often possible to deduce what the dog is trying to communicate, and if it's a physical need, addressing that need will reduce or eliminate the barking. But if no "fixable" motivation for the barking can be found, here are some steps you can take to stop your dog from barking excessively:

- Spend time with the dog. Your dog is a social animal, and needs to interact with you. Leaving a dog alone in the back yard for extended periods of time is often an initiator of excessive barking. Spending time with the dog will help to alleviate its feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Be sure that the dog gets an adequate amount of physical exercise. Keeping the dog well exercised will help to eliminate boredom, and will cause the dog to spend more of its alone time sleeping.
- It may be necessary to block the dog's view of traffic, other dogs, or pedestrians, all of which may trigger the barking.
- If all else fails, it may be necessary to try an anti-bark collar. Anti-bark collars deliver either a mild electrical shock or a spray of an unpleasantly scented herbal mixture when the dog begins to bark.

With some patience and dedication, excessive barking can usually be reduced or eliminated, leading to a much more harmonious relationship between dog and owner (as well as between owner and neighbors!).