

## WHY DO DOGS BARK?

Dogs bark to communicate, attract attention or in response to a disturbance (or distraction), amongst other reasons.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY DOG BARKS?

Find out why it is barking. If it is barking to alert you to a potential danger, such as if there is a stranger at the gate, you should praise your dog. Let it know that you have things under control and instruct it to stop barking. In some instances, such as if a cat is sitting on the wall, you may have to remove the distraction to stop your dog barking.



A dog barking excessively can become a nuisance to your neighbours. It could disturb someone's sleep or affect his / her work or study. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that his / her dog does not disturb others.

## WHAT IF MY DOG DOES NOT STOP BARKING?

A dog's senses of hearing and smell are very acute; it can detect disturbances beyond our senses. You should suspect this to be the case if your dog does not stop barking at your command. Try to remove it from the disturbance by bringing it indoors or moving it to another part of the house. If your dog barks because of a persistent or recurring disturbance that is not within your control,

you may need to change the location or setup of the place where you keep it to remove it from the disturbance, e.g. if your dog always barks at dogs going for walks with their owners, you should keep your dog in an area away from such distraction.

Your dog could also be barking because it has not been properly disciplined or socialised. A poorly disciplined or socialised dog is unlikely to listen to its owner.

All dogs can be disciplined and made to behave if the owner can be firm and consistent. Negative reinforcement such as a scolding or a very firm scruffing of the neck may sometimes be needed. Some owners throw cold water on the dog to stop the undesirable behaviour. Whichever method is used, it should not harm the dog.

If you cannot discipline your dog or cannot bring yourself to do so, you should take it for obedience training. Please note that you should "take it for obedience training" and not "send it for obedience training". You must be involved in the training process in order for the dog to learn to obey you. If someone else takes your dog for the training, it will obey that person and not you. Following the formal training, you need to continue with periodic refresher practice to ensure that the lessons are not forgotten.



## WHAT IF MY DOG IS BARKING FOR ATTENTION?

You may not be spending enough time with it. If so, you should consider changing your lifestyle or daily routine to allow more time with your dog. A dog, more than most other pets, thrives on love and attention. If one is not able to provide love and attention, one should not be keeping a dog.



If you are already spending a lot of time with it and it still barks for attention, it could be pampered. You should discipline it or take it for obedience training.

## WHAT IF MY NEW PUPPY BARKS NON-STOP?

The young puppy that you have just brought home barks because it has been introduced to a new, unfamiliar environment and is feeling lost and insecure. You should spend time with it and allow it to settle down. This should only take a few days. Be patient.

## HOW ABOUT USING TRAINING COLLARS?

Some people use training collars to control their dogs and modify their behaviour. The collar is placed on the dog's neck and works by remote control. Whenever the dog does something undesirable, the owner / trainer activates the remote control which causes the collar to discharge a small electric current onto the dog's skin which gives it a small jolt and acts to deter it from repeating the same undesirable behaviour.

There is currently no consensus on whether using a training collar is detrimental to the dog. Several animal welfare organisations including the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) are against the use of training collars because they consider it cruel and harmful to the dogs. They also feel that it encourages owners and trainers to take the easy way out when training dogs. Proponents claim that the collars do no harm if they are used according to the manufacturer's instructions. They also claim that some dogs can only be trained with the electric collar. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) does not object to the proper use of the collar.

All dogs can be trained with love, patience, diligence and positive reinforcement. Training devices are not usually necessary.

### **WHAT ABOUT DEBARKING?**

Debarking is a surgical procedure performed by a veterinarian in which a section of a dog's vocal cord is removed to reduce the volume of its bark. Debarking does not eliminate the sound of the bark completely. Sometimes the dog can also regain its bark should the vocal cord regenerate. Debarking is a solution of last resort.



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# THE BARKING DOG