

Problem Behaviors: Barking

Uncover the causes of problem barking to find a cure.

Brought to you by The Original Dog Bible Dogs bark for many reasons so its easy for barking to become an excessive habit. In fact, barking is one of the most widespread behavior problems. An underexercised dog may bark excessively because barking provides physical activity that's otherwise lacking in his daily routine. A healthy young dog needs at least one hour of vigorous running and playing every day. Without sufficient exercise, a dog may become antsy and start barking at everything that moves, just for something to do. If barking is becoming a problem and your dog gets less than an hour of vigorous exercise daily, try increasing his activity level. Take him for long walks or hikes, preferably up and down hills. Teach him to fetch, take him swimming, or train him in agility or another energetic sport. If you don't have time to exercise your dog for at least an hour each day, find someone who can. You can take your dog to doggy daycare, which offers energetic playtime for dog-friendly dogs, or you can hire a pet sitter or dog walker to exercise your dog. If hiring a professional isn't feasible, find a neighbor or friend who is willing to exercise your dog. Even a well-exercised dog might bark excessively when home alone because barking provides entertainment. One way to decrease boredom barking is to provide something more interesting for the dog to do with his mouth. Food-dispensing toys work great for this. These toys come in different shapes, textures, and sizes but all have a hollow space inside for hiding food. The food comes out bit by bit as the dog chews and manipulates the toy, keeping him focused and quiet for quite some time. If your barker spends more than a few hours alone, consider leaving two or more food-dispensing toys stuffed with different flavors. All that chewing will satisfy your dogs need for activity, and he will spend most of his time occupied with the toys. After he empties the food puzzles, your dog will probably take a nice nap to recover from all that work. If your dog is indoors and barking at what he sees outdoors, obscure his view of the excitement. If he stands on a chair or couch to bark at outdoor happenings, rearrange the furniture so this isn't possible. If when outdoors your dog barks at neighbors or passersby, try confining him to a more secluded area of the yard. A section of opaque fencing or strategically planted foliage can be useful for limiting a dogs view without creating an unsightly barrier. If appearances are unimportant, a plastic tarp stretched between two fence posts or trees may serve well. Adopting a second dog as a companion for your barker with the hope he will stop barking seldom works. Usually it just increases the noise. Two dogs together often bark more than twice as much as one.