

## Barking as an Attempt to Communicate

**This natural behavior is what dogs use to relate to their pack.**

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### Reason for Barking: An Attempt to Communicate

The dog, being a social animal, needs to communicate with his pack (humans or other dogs). He uses barking as a means to gain food, water, shelter and comfort. Many dogs, for instance, will give several sharp barks at their owners a few minutes before their regularly scheduled mealtimes. A dog will often give several short, sharp barks as an invitation to other dogs or people to play. When a dog is left outside in a fenced area and his pack members (his family) are inside, he will frequently stand at the door and bark to communicate his desire to be let inside to join them.

However, sometimes, as we've mentioned earlier, an owner reacts inappropriately to barking and the dog reads the owners actions as something good that he'd like repeated. Let's say that the dog brings a toy to you and drops it at your feet. Then he stands there barking and looking up at you. Without thinking, you pick up the toy and toss it across the room. That behavior signals a message to the dog that you're willing to play with him whenever he asks. Of course, this will not always be convenient, yet you've taught the dog that standing in front of you and barking will get you to play with him regardless of what you're doing at the time.

This behavior is usually found in a high-energy dog who is bored and has nothing to do. At this point, you have two choices. The first choice is to respond to the dogs demand by throwing the toy for him. This response will probably escalate into a whole series of tossing and retrieving. One toss is usually never enough!

The second choice is to acknowledge the dogs boredom and, before you toss the toy, have the dog do something for you. A sit or a down/stay would be appropriate. Once the dog complies with your command, praise him and then toss the toy. If he brings the toy back to you and begins barking again, repeat the procedure so that each time he demands your attention, he must earn it by doing something first. Very shortly he'll decide that he doesn't want to be bothered with doing something just so you'll throw the toy. He'll soon find something else to do and wander off to entertain himself.