

Stop Your Dog From Barking

An expert answers your questions about dog barking.

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Q. My dog Timber barks at everything that moves, even rain. What can I do?

A. Barking is one way dogs communicate. Your job is to figure out what Timber is saying. The dog might be responding to a change in its routine or surroundings, alerting you to a threatening person or situation or simply expressing happiness or boredom. And you may need only to give it more attention, socialize it to more people or give it fun toys to play with while you're away from home. Other solutions: Leave your dog with a relative, friend, pet-sitter or day-care center to keep it entertained while you're away.

Ask your veterinarian about desensitization and behavior modification techniques. The veterinarian may recommend a calming medication or herbal remedy in addition to training.

Try a dog collar that releases citronella mist when triggered by barking but only when other options fail. Some owners have their dogs debarked, surgically removing all or most of their vocal cords. Many people consider the procedure inhumane and unethical because it inhibits the dog's ability to communicate without addressing the underlying cause. It also exposes dogs to the risk of improper surgical procedures (the dog could eventually begin barking again), complications that may affect the dog's breathing and respiratory function or require a second surgery.

Word to the wise: Adding a second dog to the home usually does not solve a barking problem and could even increase it.