

How to Get Your Dog to Stop Barking

Six ways to control your dog's barking:

While all of these techniques can help stop your dog from barking, don't expect results overnight.

Here's a list of six techniques that can help stop your dog from barking. While all of them can be very successful, you shouldn't expect miraculous results overnight. The longer your dog has been practicing the barking behavior, the longer it will take for him to change his ways.

Always remember to keep these tips in mind while training:

- **Don't yell** at your dog to be quiet—it just sounds like you're barking along with him.
- Keep your training sessions **positive and upbeat**.
- **Be consistent** so you don't confuse your dog. Everyone in your family must apply the training methods every time your dog barks inappropriately. You can't let your dog get away with inappropriate barking some times and not others.

1. Remove the motivation

Your dog gets some kind of reward when he barks. Otherwise, he wouldn't do it. Figure out what he gets out of barking and remove it. Don't give your dog the opportunity to continue the barking behavior.

Example: barking at passersby

- If he barks at people or animals passing by the living room window, manage his behavior by closing the curtains or putting your dog in another room.
- If he barks at passersby when he's in the yard, bring him into the house. Never leave your dog outside unsupervised all day and night.

2. Ignore the barking

Ignore your dog's barking for as long as it takes him to stop. That means don't give him any attention at all while he's barking. Your attention only rewards him for being noisy. Don't talk to him, don't touch him, and don't even look at him. When he finally quiets, even to take a breath, reward him with a treat.

To be successful with this method, you must wait as long as it takes for him to stop barking. If he barks for an hour and you finally get so frustrated that you yell at him to be quiet, the next time he'll probably bark for an hour and a half. He learns that if he just barks long enough you'll give him attention.

Example: barking when confined

- When you put your dog in his crate or in a gated room, turn your back and ignore him.
- Once he stops barking, turn around, praise him, and give him a treat.
- As he catches on that being quiet gets him a treat, lengthen the amount of time he must remain quiet before being rewarded.
- Remember to start small by rewarding him for being quiet for just a few seconds, then working up to longer periods of quiet.
- Keep it fun by varying the amount of time. Sometimes reward him after 5 seconds, then 12 seconds, then 3 seconds, then 20 seconds, and so on.

3. Desensitize your dog to the stimulus

Gradually get your dog accustomed to whatever is causing him to bark. Start with the stimulus (the thing that makes him bark) at a distance. It must be far enough away that he doesn't bark when he sees it. Feed him lots of good treats. Move the stimulus a little closer (perhaps as little as a few inches or a few feet to start) and feed treats. If the stimulus moves out of sight, stop giving your dog treats. You want your dog to learn that the appearance of the stimulus leads to good things (treats!).

Example: barking at dogs

- Have a friend with a dog stand out of sight or far enough away so your dog won't bark at the other dog.
- As your friend and her dog come into view, start feeding your dog lots of very yummy treats.
- Stop feeding treats as soon as your friend and her dog disappear from view.
- Repeat the process multiple times
- Remember not to try to progress too quickly as it may take days or weeks before your dog can pay attention to you and the treats without barking at the other dog.

4. Teach your dog the "quiet" command

It may sound nonsensical, but the first step of this technique is to teach your dog to bark on command. Give your dog the command to "speak," wait for him to bark two or three times, and then stick a tasty treat in front of his nose. When he stops barking to sniff the treat, praise him and give him the treat. Repeat until he starts barking as soon as you say "speak."

Once your dog can reliably bark on command, teach him the "quiet" command. In a calm environment with no distractions, tell him to "speak." When he starts barking, say "quiet" and stick a treat in front of his nose. Praise him for being quiet and give him the treat.

Example: someone at the door

- When the doorbell rings, your dog alerts you to the presence of an "intruder" by barking wildly.
- Once you've taught your dog the "quiet" command in a calm environment, practice in increasingly distracting situations until your dog can immediately stop barking when asked to, even when that "intruder" arrives at the door.

5. Ask your dog for an incompatible behavior

When your dog starts barking, ask him to do something that's incompatible with barking. Teaching your dog to react to barking stimuli with something that inhibits him from barking, such as lying down in his bed.

Example: someone at the door

- Toss a treat on his mat and tell him to "go to your place."
- When he's reliably going to his mat to earn a treat, up the ante by opening the door while he's on his mat. If he gets up, close the door immediately.
- Repeat until he stays on his mat while the door opens.
- Then increase the difficulty by having someone ring the doorbell while your dog is on his mat. Reward him if he stays in place.

6. Keep your dog tired

Make sure your dog is getting sufficient physical and mental exercise every day. A tired dog is a good dog and one who is less likely to bark from boredom or frustration. Depending on his breed, age, and health, your dog may require several long walks as well as a good game of chasing the ball and playing with some interactive toys.