



GREATER BIRMINGHAM  
HUMANE SOCIETY

## Pet Resource Library

### Barking

Barking is a common complaint from both dog owners and their neighbors. Occasional barking is natural, but continuous barking for long periods of time is a problem that needs to be addressed.

#### **THE FIRST STEP**

- Find out why or when your dog is barking.
- Understanding the causes will help you best address the problem. While each situation is different, remember these key points as you begin to address the issue:
- Interrupt any barking so he doesn't become stuck in the behavior.
- Redirect his attention and provide him something more appropriate to do.

#### **THINGS THAT CAN HELP**

- Some dogs bark out of boredom. Providing mental and physical exercise will help keep your dog happy and healthy. Tired dogs have less energy to bark.
- If your dog is overly vocal when visitors arrive, he may be trying to alert you to possible danger. He doesn't know they are supposed to be there. Let him know it's all right and teach him what he should do instead. Alternative behaviors can be going to his bed or waiting quietly while you open the door.
- Barking at people, other animals or objects typically indicates fear or anxiety.
- Pairing treats with the things your dog is afraid of will help him feel more comfortable. When things are no longer scary, there is less reason to bark.
- Dogs quickly learn that barking gets our attention. If your dog is looking at you and barking excitedly, stop talking to, petting or even looking at him. You can even walk away to send a clear message that barking stops attention. Once he's quiet, he can earn your attention by doing other behaviors, such as sit, down or shake.



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#### **TEACH A QUIET CUE**

- Stick to a one-word cue, like “Enough” or “quiet,” to indicate the barking should stop.
- Once he’s quiet, reward him with treats and praise. This will help him understand what you want.
- Be aware that shouting back at your dog may worsen the situation, intensify his barking and increase his anxiety. Some dogs may take your shouting to mean that you’re joining in and there really is something to bark about. Stay calm, gain his attention and reward better behavior.
- Physical punishment is seldom effective in correcting barking problems and can lead to other behavioral problems, including aggression.

#### **BARK COLLARS**

- Bark collars work like a bandage that quickly becomes ineffective if the underlying cause is not addressed. Many dogs also learn to ignore the collar and may start to engage in other problem behaviors due to increased frustration.
- Excessive barking can create high levels of frustration for both you and your dog. Spending time to get this behavior under control will help ensure a happy home for everyone.