

Is your dog barking too much?

It's normal and natural for dogs to bark, but too much barking can be annoying and upsetting for neighbours. If you're out a lot, or you're just used to the noise, you might not realise just how bad it is.

Talking it over

If the noise your dog is making is upsetting your neighbours, you could try talking things over with them. Stay calm, and try to see it from their point of view. Perhaps they're working shifts, or they have a baby or small children. They might also be worried about whether the dog is OK.

Understanding the problem

- Speak to your neighbours to find out when your dog is barking and for how long
- When you're at home, make a note of when and why your dog is barking
- Try using a webcam, video camera or tape recorder to find out what your dog is doing when you're not in
- Try a 'set-up' – pretend you're going out for the day, then wait outside the door to see what your dog does

General advice

- Stay calm and don't punish your dog
- Reward good behaviour and ignore attention seeking behaviour
- Spend time with your dog. Dogs are pack animals and they need your company
- Take your dog for a walk regularly. A tired dog barks less.

Possible solutions

There are some simple steps you can take to reduce the amount of noise your dog is making.

Your dog barks and howls when left alone

- If possible, take your dog with you or see if a friend or relative can look after it
- Give your dog something to do while you're away – leave a chew and rubber toys
- Ignore your dog for 15 minutes before you go out
- Put a radio on quietly before you leave
- Leave an item of clothing with your dog which smells of you
- When you go out, leave your dog for only 1 minute. If your dog starts barking and howling, go back in and tell it firmly to be quiet. Don't punish your dog as this will make things worse. Slowly increase the time you're away

Your dog lives outside and barks at noises, people, animals or cars

- If possible, let your dog live indoors. Dogs are pack animals and need company
- Give your dog something to do – leave a chew and rubber toys
- When your dog barks, tell it firmly to be quiet. Don't punish your dog as this will make things worse.

Your dog barks at things outside your home or when it's in the garden

- Keep your dog away from areas where it can see people or other animals
- Go out with your dog when it's in your garden
- If your dog starts barking when outside, call it in straight away.

Your dog is barking to get attention

- Don't give it any attention or treats when it's barking
- Try deliberately ignoring your dog for 20-30 minutes, two or three times a day
- If your dog barks at the same time every day, try taking it for a walk at that time
- If your dog barks when it's excited, don't play with it late at night or early in the morning.

What not to do

- Never punish your dog
- Don't use mechanical devices such as anti-bark collars, as it could make your dog anxious. Get advice from your vet
- Don't get a second dog as this can make things worse.

Further help

Contact your vet, dog warden or an animal behaviourist for advice:

- Dog Warden service. Tel: (01582) 510 330.
- Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors, Tel:(01386) 751151, www.apbc.org.uk,
- Environmental Protection team, Tel: (01582) 510330, www.luton.gov.uk/barkingdogs