

Problem: Your dog guards his territory by barking at people, animals or cars.

Solution: Keep your dog away from the front of the house or flat. Screen your windows. If it starts barking outside, call it in straight away. You could ask a vet, animal behaviourist or dog warden about behaviour therapy.

Problem: Your dog is barking to get attention.

Solution: Look at your dog then look away to show it you are not going to respond. Don't give it any attention - or anything else - whilst it's barking. Try deliberately ignoring it for 20-30 minutes, two or three times a day, and get everyone in the house to do the same. Doing this for 15 minutes before you go out can help stop your dog barking when you leave. A vet, animal behaviourist or dog warden may be able to give you advice.

Problem: You went out without taking your dog for a walk, and it's barking through frustration.

Solution: Wear different clothes for walking your dog. Leave your dog's lead where it can see it. If you are leaving without taking the lead the dog will know that it's not going with you.

What not to do

- ▶ Don't punish your dog. It might mistake it for attention, and it could also make it more anxious.
- ▶ Don't use mechanical devices if your dog is anxious - like anti-barking collars - these could make the dog even more anxious.
- ▶ Don't get a second dog unless you are sure it's going to make your dog feel more secure, not less.

Keep your neighbours informed about what you are doing to stop the barking.

If the problem doesn't get resolved

If you don't take steps to solve the problem, and your local authority receives complaints about the noise your dog is making, the authority will investigate the complaint. The local authority may seek to resolve the problem by mediating between you and the complainants, but where it does not do so, or where such mediation is unsuccessful, and the authority is satisfied that the noise amounts to a statutory nuisance, it will serve you with an abatement notice requiring the noise to be reduced to an acceptable level.

If you fail to comply with an abatement notice, you could face prosecution and, if convicted, a fine of up to £5,000 (and possibly further daily fines of up to £500 for each day on which the offence continues after conviction).

For more information and advice about why your dog barks and what you can do about it:

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC)

PO Box 46, Worcester WR8 9YS

Tel: 01386 751151

Web: www.apbc.org.uk

Send a SAE for a list of APBC members.

You may also want to talk to an Environmental Health Practitioner or the Dog Warden.

Regulatory Services

Cheshire West and Chester

Tel: 0300 123 8123

Web: http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/environment/animal_welfare/barking_dogs.aspx

Quiet Dogs Happy Neighbours

A dog owner's guide
to reduce barking



Quiet dog, happy neighbour

Research shows that people who regularly talk to their neighbours are more satisfied with life. It also shows that neighbour concerns are more likely to be solved when people discuss things calmly and work out solutions between themselves.

A significant number of noise complaints received by the Council every year are about barking dogs. If you have ever sat in your garden on a sunny day or tried to get to sleep when someone's dog is barking, you will know just how annoying it can be.

Excessive barking can be prevented and this leaflet is designed to help you avoid upsetting those living around you – after all, “everyone wants to be good neighbours” as the theme tune tells us.

It's normal and natural for dogs to bark. You may even want a dog to bark for security when there's a knock at the door. The problem comes when barking goes on and on and nothing is done to prevent it. If you are out a lot, or you're just used to the noise, you might not realise just how bad it is.

If neighbours can't solve barking dog issues, the Council may have to get involved and this can involve serious penalties.

Talking it over

If the noise your dog is making is upsetting your neighbours, the first step is to talk things over with them. Stay calm, and try to see it from their point of view: perhaps they're working shifts, or have a baby or young children. Bear in mind that they might be worried about whether the dog is OK and remember, you might not know how serious the problem is if your dog is barking more when you're not at home.

Understanding the problem

Ask your neighbours to tell you exactly when your dog is barking, and for how long. If you're out a lot, ask them to note down the times when the barking happens. If you're in, make a note of it yourself. Think about using a web cam or video camera to find out what your dog is doing when you're not there, or try a 'set-up' -pretend you're going out for the day, then wait outside the door to see what your dog does. If it starts barking and howling, go back in and tell it firmly to be quiet. Punishing your dog will only make things worse.

First steps

There are some simple steps you can take straight away to cut down the amount of noise your dog is making. This will help calm the situation between you and your neighbours, and give you time to work out why your dog is barking.

- ▶ If your dog barks at things outside your yard or garden, don't let it go outside on its own. Keep it away from windows, so it can't see people or other animals.
- ▶ If your dog barks at the same time every day, when someone is leaving to go to work or school, try to keep it busy at that time. For example, take it for a walk.
- ▶ Try to keep your dog calm. If it barks when it's excited, don't play with it at anti-social times like very late at night.
- ▶ If your dog is barking and you are in a flat or a semi, try to keep it away from any walls you share with your neighbours.
- ▶ Don't leave your dog outside if it is barking to be let in.

- ▶ See if you can get a friend or relative to look after the dog when you go out, or take it with you.
- ▶ Make sure your dog gets some exercise before you go out. A tired dog barks less.

Longer-term solutions

Some general rules

Be consistent. Every time your dog is quiet when it would normally have barked, praise it or give it a treat. When it barks, tell it firmly to be quiet.

You may also need to remember that your dog is a part of the family. If it only barks when you leave the house, keep it inside. Leave some toys or chews, and put the radio on quietly. If your dog is distressed, keep it inside with you whenever you are at home - dogs are pack animals, and they often need company.

Tackling some specific problems

Problem: Your dog is clingy, and howls or whines when left alone.

Solution: A vet, animal behaviourist or a dog warden may be able to tell you how to help your dog get used to being on its own.

Problem: Your dog is frightened. It may look scared (ears back, tail low), having trouble settling, or keep trying to hide.

Solution: If your dog likes hiding, make a den for it. If it is scared of noise, mask it by putting the radio on quietly. If it is frightened of other people or animals, shut the curtains or doors. Think about talking to a vet, animal behaviourist or dog warden.