

# Dealing with Barking Dogs

Ever since our ancestors brought the first wolf cub back to the cave, there have been questions and conflicts about what is acceptable behavior in dogs. As humans, we live in a community with neighbors all around us -- neighbors who have the privilege of choosing whether to share their home with dogs. We generally have a comfortable relationship with our neighbors, even if we do not know them well. However, one of the most common causes of friction between neighbors is a barking dog. Even the most staunch dog lover must admit that a barking dog can be a public nuisance.

## Dogs do bark

It would be unrealistic to think a dog guardian can keep a dog from barking, at least on occasion. The question is, how much barking is allowable? Having a dog in the neighborhood that barks off-and-on for part of the day is not necessarily against the law. To find out what, if any, ordinances apply in your area, check with your local animal control agency or look for city or county ordinances that address the issue.

## The first step

The first step in dealing with a barking dog problem is to make certain the dog's guardian is aware that the barking is an annoyance. Although it may seem obvious, it is best to assume that the guardian is not aware of the problem. If a friendly visit seems out of the question, then write a card or letter, respectfully explaining the problem. Focus on what the dog is doing, rather than accuse them of being a bad guardian or neighbor. Think about how you would like to be approached if your dog was making noise.

If you are a pet guardian, be proactive. Ask your neighbors if your dog barks while you are gone or if the level of barking is disturbing. If so, take immediate steps to alleviate the problem. Not only will you have a better-behaved dog, you will also have happier neighbors.

## Common reasons for barking

Much like the wolves that first joined humans around a fire, today's dogs are pack animals that are genetically coded to play, run, and hunt in a group. Some of the most common reasons for barking is that a dog feels insecure, scared, lonely, or bored. If the dog is outside a lot, bringing it inside so that it feels like a member of the family may help tremendously. Another easy method of minimizing barking is to give the dog more attention, including exercise and play.

Whatever the cause, the process of overcoming excessive barking can be a rewarding and bonding experience for both dog and guardian. It is a wise and caring pet guardian who helps his or her canine companion become an acceptable resident of the community. As with most conflicts among neighbors, respecting each other's point of view and working together to reach an agreeable solution should be our goal.

