

Barking

Barking is one of a number of methods that dogs can use to communicate with each other and with us. Every dog has a number of different barks in their repertoire, and which one they use will depend on their emotional state and the motivation behind their behaviour.

There is nothing more likely to upset the neighbours or get you stressed than a dog that repeatedly barks in certain situations and it can cause huge problems for owners - it's therefore not something you want to encourage!

Where, when and the frequency and duration of barking will depend on a number of factors, such as breed, previous experience, age and environmental factors.


Dogs bark for a number of reasons:

• Frustration	• As a warning – when territorial
• Seeking attention	• Nervousness
• Anxiety – e.g. when left alone	• Stress
• Boredom	• For fun!

The key to tackling the barking is to identify the trigger. Does your dog bark at you if:

- You stop playing or stroking him?
- You withhold an item he desires?
- You restrict his access to someone or something?

If yes, then the motivation for the behaviour could be either frustration or attention seeking. The dog is trying to get you to respond to him in the best way he knows.

 **Barking will increase if it is rewarded!** The following may reward and encourage the barking:

- **Giving in and offering your dog exactly what he is asking for e.g. food or a toy.**
- **Stroking or touching him.**
- **Telling him to “Be quiet” – speaking to your dog (even in a negative way) can be rewarding.**
- **Frowning or scolding.**
- **Eye contact.**

 **So...**

- **Ignore it - turn away and carry on with something else or, walk out of the room and close the door behind you, (return to him when he's quiet).**
- **Be consistent - this means on every occasion, everyone must do it**

If everyone is consistent your dog will eventually work out that he gets no response from you for barking, and the behaviour will decrease. However if one person continues to reward the barking he will carry on. If your dog is barking in stressful situations, when anxious or nervous, he or she will need a more in-depth analysis by a behaviour specialist. Call the Alpha Pet Behaviour Practice for further advice on: 01753 859004