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Introduction

Does this sound familiar?

Do you feel as though your dog's barking makes greeting someone at the door impossible? You may have resorted to putting your dog outside or in another room when company arrives because your greeting can't be heard over your dog's ear-splitting welcome.

Does your dog's continual "on-patrol" behavior constantly startle you, as she barks at the sound of your neighbor's car door, passersby or the kids playing down the street? Do your admonishments to "BE QUIET!" fall on deaf ears?

Is your dog's barking a problem in other places, such as training classes, doggie day care or when she's boarded?

Have you returned home and found citations from Animal Control or nasty notes from neighbors about your noisy canine?

Perhaps you're not even sure your dog is barking too much—maybe you think you just have overly sensitive neighbors. If the complaining neighbor is someone you've had other, non-dog disputes with, your dog's barking may just be adding fuel to the fire. Animal control officers find that many barking dog complaints aren't really about the dog; more likely the barking has become a focal point for other conflicts and ill feelings between neighbors.

When does barking become a problem?

Everyone knows that barking is normal dog behavior. Barking is communication. Expecting a dog to never bark is like asking a person to never talk. Most dog owners want their dogs to bark in certain situations and not in others.

Neighbors who don't own dogs, however, might be just as happy if they never had to listen to canines communicating. Yet, choosing to live in either an urban or suburban area means people must accept a certain amount of noise pollution. This includes not only barking dogs, but chil-

dren playing, noisy lawn mowers and weed-whackers, motorcycles, and the occasional loud party.

Whether your dog's barking is a problem is determined not only by your dog's actual behavior, but by when and where it occurs, and also who hears it. Even a bout of normal barking can be perceived as nuisance barking – if it wakes you up at 2:00 a.m. or occurs at 2:00 p.m. right underneath the window of a neighbor who works from home.

Consequences of canine barking problems

For your community

If your dog's barking is causing a problem, it can create a variety of negative consequences for you, your dog and your community. Responding to a complaint about your barking dog costs your community money and time. Animal control agencies, prosecutors and courts can be tied up dealing with violations of barking dog ordinances and have less time to deal with more serious animal issues.

For you

Your dog's barking can put your relationship with him at risk. If your dog becomes more of an annoyance and less enjoyable to have around, he may not remain in your home.

Even if you would never, ever consider giving up your dog, his noisy behavior may result in sleepless nights, disruptions in your activities, general aggravation, angry neighbors, worry about how your dog is affecting others, and even fines or other legal actions from your community.

For your dog

If your dog is barking excessively, it likely is having a negative effect on his well-being. Fear, boredom, frustration and physical pain—all common causes of barking—are stressors that can compromise your dog's welfare.

And unless your dog's behavior changes, you may be forced to restrict what areas of your house or yard your dog can occupy, which may also impact his quality of life. If left outside, your barking dog is at risk of abuse by angry neighbors. External pressures may force you to consider de-barking your dog or even giving him up.



All of these negative consequences should provide strong motivation for you to prevent or resolve your dog's barking problem. All dog owners have a responsibility to keep their dogs from becoming nuisances to the community and to meet their dogs' behavioral needs.

Where should you start?

Have you been at a loss for how to decrease your dog's excessive barking? Do you feel you've "tried everything" without success? Chances are you haven't tried the right thing. All the things you've tried before may be irrelevant and ineffective because they didn't address the "why" of your dog's barking. You can't choose the best course of action until you have determined the why.

Finding the solution to the problem is the last step, not the first. The first step is gathering information and recording it in a logical form. The tools to do so are in this book.

Overview of the book

In Chapter One you'll learn about the Barking Profile, a unique questionnaire that helps you gather the information you need to determine the cause of your dog's barking. Read the rest of the chapters in order, completing your dog's Barking Profile as you go. By doing so, you'll free yourself from wasted time and effort doing things that don't make sense and may be doomed to fail.

Chapters Two and Three help you gather the information you need to fill out the Barking Profile. Chapter Two describes the different kinds of sounds that dogs make. Chapter Three helps you analyze how your dog looks when he barks, what else he is doing when he is barking, and when, where and at what he is barking. It includes a "Body Posture Checklist." All of this information is crucial for analyzing your dog's behavior.

Chapter Four explains the major reasons dogs vocalize, and the distinguishing features of each type of motivation. In Chapter Five you'll learn how to use Your Dog's Barking Profile and our unique BarkCharts to determine the cause of your dog's barking.

Although Chapter Six is brief, you'll want to read it carefully, because it tells you what NOT to do for your dog's barking problem. Our unique **Positive Proaction Plan**, a five-part strategy to prevent, manage and resolve most barking problems, is presented in Chapter Seven. You can use this plan for your dog's barking behavior, as well as other behavior issues with your dog. Chapter Eight gives you more details about how to use the Positive Proaction Plan to manage and resolve each of the different kinds of barking problems.

In Chapter Nine you'll learn how different kinds of anti-bark devices work, the pros and cons of each, and how to use them effectively and humanely. Surgical debarking is also discussed. Chapter Ten tells you what to look for if you decide to seek professional help for your dog's barking behavior.

Finally, at the back of the book you'll find references, useful websites and resources to help you resolve your dog's barking problem.

Don't be tempted to skip to the solution chapters first. That takes you back to the faulty approach of seeking a solution before you understand the problem. By taking haphazard, try-this-try-that steps, or relying on supposed "quick fixes" *before* you understand the behavior, you risk making your dog's barking worse and/or creating other problems.

It's time to introduce you to **Your Dog's Barking Profile** so you can get started analyzing your dog's behavior.

