



NoiseActionWeek

Why dogs bark – and how to reduce it

Dog barking is one of the most common noise complaints received by local authorities.

During Noise Action Week and all year round, take simple steps to help keep your neighbourhood peaceful.

Why dogs bark

Dogs bark to communicate - to express how they feel or respond to their environment. Persistent barking can be distressing for neighbours, and sometimes a sign that your dog is unhappy or stressed. Understanding why your dog is barking is the first step to improving the situation.

Common reasons dogs bark:

- Boredom or lack of stimulation
- Attention-seeking
- Reacting to specific sounds or activity (doorbell, passers-by, other dogs)
- Territorial or protective behaviour
- Anxiety, stress, or separation problems

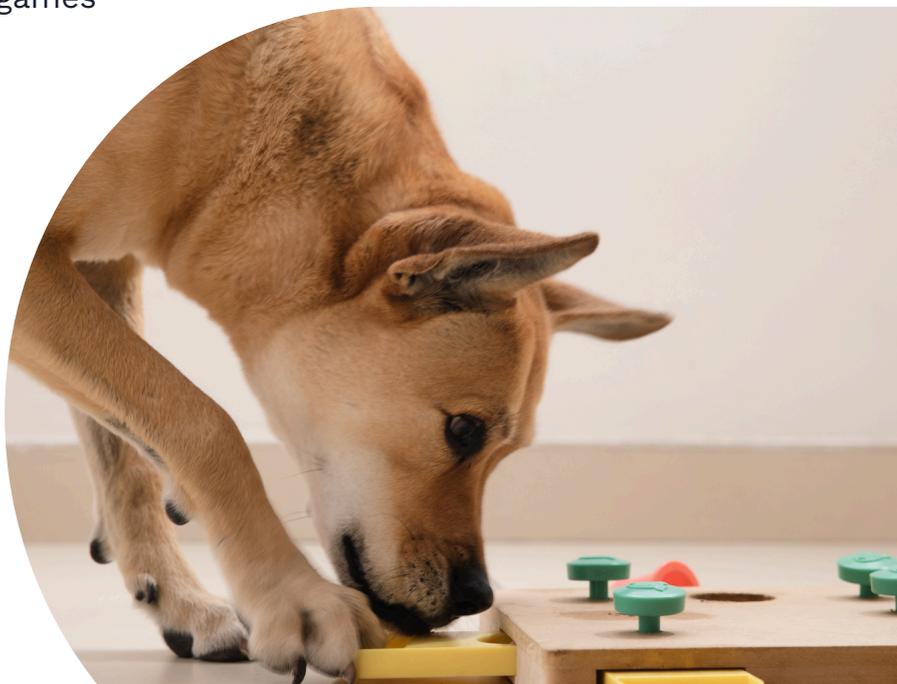
Help your dog feel calmer and quieter

Increase activity

A well-exercised and mentally stimulated dog is less likely to bark out of boredom.

Try:

- Daily exercise suited to your dog's breed, age and health. Try and make sure your dog gets some exercise before you leave the house.
- Playtime and positive interaction with you
- Food-puzzle toys or scent-based games
- Short, fun training sessions



Change the environment

If you've noticed that your dog responds to specific triggers, then work to reduce these things.

- If outside noises upset your dog, gently mask them with background noise (such as a white noise or calming nature sounds playlist)
- If they bark at people walking past, try frosted window film or partially closed curtains
- Provide a cosy, safe space where they can relax — many dogs like a covered den or bed in a quiet corner



Support dogs who struggle when left alone

Barking when left alone is usually linked to separation anxiety.

- Build confidence gradually — practice short absences, then slowly increase the time
- Keep a consistent daily routine so your dog knows what to expect
- Leave your dog with something they can engage with, for instance, a safe toy, a food puzzle (such as a [frozen Kong](#)), or leaving the TV or radio on

Train calm behaviour

Teach your dog what you do want them to do — and reward it.

- Praise and reward quiet behaviour
- Distract and redirect barking with a trained behaviour, e.g. “go to bed” or “settle”

What not to do

- Don't use shock collars or spray collars
- Don't shout at your dog
- Avoid rewarding barking with attention or treats

These methods may stop the sound temporarily, but they do not solve the underlying cause. They can increase stress, harm your dog's welfare, and may make barking worse over time.

Check for health issues

If barking starts suddenly or seems unusual, it may have a medical cause.

Consider:

- Has this barking pattern changed recently?
- Could your dog be in pain?
- Are there signs of cognitive or sensory changes (e.g. hearing or sight loss)?

If unsure, speak with your vet.

If barking remains persistent — get professional help

If the barking continues or is linked to anxiety or behavioural issues:

- Start with your vet
- If needed, they may refer you to a qualified behaviourist

Make sure to use professionals who are properly regulated and accredited (for example, members of recognised professional registers such as the [Animal Behaviour and Training Council](#) or the [Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors](#)). Be cautious — anyone can call themselves a “dog behaviourist”. Look for reputable qualifications and positive, welfare-friendly approaches.

If a complaint is made about your dog’s barking

If a neighbour complains about your dog barking, your local council will investigate. If they decide the barking is a [statutory nuisance](#) - meaning it causes a significant and ongoing disturbance - they can issue a formal warning or legal notice requiring you to take steps to reduce the noise. Failure to comply with this notice could lead to prosecution and, in some cases, a fine.



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About Noise Action Week

Noise Action Week takes place from the 11th - 15th May. It is a campaign to raise awareness and reduce noise pollution across the UK.

Noise Action Week is run by the Environmental Policy Implementation Community (EPIC) and supported by leading acoustics and environmental health organisations.

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