

Barking Dogs! Understanding Canine Vocalization To Prevent Nuisance Barking

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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By the time you're listening to this podcast, my team and I will have had a major celebration, in that we have got 100,000 subscribers to our YouTube channel. And that is something to celebrate. And so, I decided that we would take the most asked about topic and share it to celebrate our 100,000 subscribers to our YouTube channel. So, if it's you, congratulations. If it's not you, hey, jump on over to YouTube and subscribe. Lots of great videos over there.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And what is the most asked about topic you may ask? It's barking. Barking dogs, number one by far that we get asked and so much so that it's going to have to be a series. So, today I'm going to share with you a different perspective about barking dogs.

I want you to think for a moment that dogs are both verbal and nonverbal communicators. If you own a dog, then I know you know that. And for verbal communication, I want you to think less about barking and think more about vocalizing.

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Because vocalizing is something that we as humans do as well. And we have different ways to vocalize. For example, we can talk, "Hello, I'm talking." We can whisper. We can yell. We can squeal when we're excited. We can sob when we are sad. We can laugh. All of those are ways that we are vocalizing.

Our vocal cords are projecting sound. Well, if you consider that dogs are doing the same thing, you might just change your attitude towards "that barking dog." Consider for a moment, what if dogs are just trying to communicate with us?

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Remember, I've said this many, many times. A dog has needs that we really as pet owners should be meeting. If you don't have the time in your life to make sure your dog gets out and gets fresh air, [gets some exercise](#), gets enrichment by you [engaging in some games](#) with them, training them, yes, even older dogs love that, all of those things contribute to a dog having a balanced, well-rounded life.

And if you have that dog that has a balanced, well-rounded life, then you're going to find the barking that frustrates you the most will likely come down in frequency. But you also will realize that vocalization is communication with you.

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And rather than your immediate response be, "Would you stop that barking dog!", your immediate response should be, "I wonder why the dog feels the need to vocalize?" So, let's discuss the reasons why a dog may feel the need to vocalize. Now that may help anybody who has a barking dog to know what to do next. But don't worry, I'm going to talk dog training for you as well.

So, I've broken it down into five big reasons why dogs may vocalize. And number one, you could say really isn't a reason on its own. And that is there are some breeds that just vocalize more than others. A Beagle will bay, throw back their head, and they've got this unique sound that they call a Beagle bay.



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If you haven't heard a bay before, I suggest you do a YouTube search for that. Beagles will bay, Huskies often howl, especially if there's more than one Husky in the house. So, there are breeds that tend to be more vocal than others.

For example, when I was a teenager in high school, I looked after a kennel of show Basenjis. They yodeled. Every morning, the whole kennel would yodel. It was kind of entertaining actually. And so, breed may be the reason. And really, I hope you did your research, there are just some breeds that like to talk. There are some people that like to talk. You may know somebody like that. Okay, I digress.

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Reason number two, and this is a big, big reason for many dogs. They are [expressing emotion](#). Imagine if you were laughing and you got punished for that. "You aren't allowed to laugh." What would happen to your relationship with the person that's punishing you for laughing? Or if you were so overwhelmed with excitement because your long-lost BFF walked through the door, and you squealed and you got punished for squealing.

So, if you think of your dog barking as vocalization, you might have a little bit more compassion for what's going on. I'd like you to [get out that journal](#) I keep asking you to keep and write down your own dog's bark. You will notice that the dogs bark at different tones, different pitches, and different frequencies.

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So, sometimes it might be a (*dog sound), other times it might be a (*dog sound). So, just mark that down and see what's happening at that time. Because when a dog's excited, say you're coming through the door after work, they're probably going to bark with one or two big loud woofs like, "Yay! It's a good thing. I'm so excited you're here!"

As opposed if somebody strange coming through the door, especially if they were you know, looked different, like you know, Sasquatch came through your door, you would probably get a (*dog sound), because the dog would be alerting that this is potentially dangerous.

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So, dogs will bark because they are alerting to you and because you're the family to anybody else that's in the family that needs to know that. So, dogs that are happy are going to bark. Dogs that are alerting because they're afraid, they may also be alerting because they're curious. That might be a slightly different bark.

"I'm not afraid, but who's that over there?" They might be a little curious. A lot of dogs will bark when they're initiating play. [They play bow](#), they get low in the front end, their back end high, and they might do one or two barks as part of the initiation to play.

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Your dog might bark, and this could be alerting as well when they're fearful. If your dog is [anxious about being left alone](#), they may bark and [that anxiety](#) could be described as loneliness, but the dog definitely is anxious.

And so, they will give a continuous, it doesn't stop. A continuous bark calling for their people because yes, they're anxious about being left alone. And I think one of the biggest reasons that dogs bark is they're frustrated.



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Maybe they're behind a barrier. Maybe somebody is passing the window, and you know they're feeling you know pretty full of themselves, and they'd like to tell that person, "Get off my property." Or it's another dog, or it's a cat, or it's a squirrel, "I got to let them know I live here." So, frustration in [podcast episode number 88](#), I talked about barrier frustration.

So, dogs who look out a window, dogs who are behind a fence, dogs who are in a kennel, it could even be a dog that's tied up somewhere, or you're walking a dog on a leash, that is barrier frustration. They could bark for that reason. But frustration doesn't happen only because of barriers.

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A lot of dogs will bark in frustration when you as their owner [have not given them clarity](#) with your expectations in training. So, whether it be an agility handler who is cueing their dog so ineffectively, the dog turns the wrong way, realizes they're wrong, and then gives you a woof because you know what, "What did you mean turn right? It was a left."

A dog may also bark in frustration because, "I just want to pull out my hair! I don't know what you want! How can I earn that cookie? I don't get it!" So, you might get a dog that barks in frustration that way. So, emotion is a big, big reason why a dog will vocalize, my friend.

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So, keep that journal, consider what's going on, and let's go on to reason number three, which is related to emotions. And that is a dog may bark if the pack is barking. If you ever walked into a boarding kennel and the dogs all go off at certain times, it's a pack.

"Oh, you're doing it? You're doing it? Okay. I'm joining in the choir." So, if you have a large number of dogs in your home, they all may bark at the same time. And it may be at nothing at all, but one dog barked and "if you're barking, I'm barking."

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Reason number four why dogs may bark, older dogs may bark because of dementia. So, be a little more empathetic with your older dogs. Talk to your veterinarian and see if there's something that you can do in changing your dog's diet or potentially a prescription for your dog who is suffering from the effects of old age.

Reason number five, and again, I would think with frustration this would be the number one reason why dogs feel the need to vocalize. And that is it's been reinforced somewhere. Why do dogs do anything? It's got to have some [reinforcement value](#) other than the emotional reasons, obviously.

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So, somewhere in your life with your dog, there could have been some reinforcement. And it could even be you turned and yelled at them. They got your attention, "Woo hoo hoo, I think I'm going to try that again." Do they want to get yelled at? No. It may be your dog's barking may be [a pattern of reinforcement](#) because they anticipate.

Something happens at the same time every day. And so, they start to bark because they're excited. Remember emotion? Excited about that pattern about to be repeated today. Let me give you a little example story from friends of mine who they had a young puppy that they were going through our program with, and they got up to Game Day 11 I think in Recalls. So, they had done [Crate Games](#), and their dog was super at it.



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It was just a young puppy. I believe it was four months old when they had to go away, and they left the puppy with one of their parents. When they came back two weeks later, rather than following the directions on "Here's where the puppy sleeps at night and here's what she has to do before you open the crate," the puppy had never gone in her crate, and she slept on the bed the whole time.

From that point on, my friend couldn't get her to go in a crate. Now, she would happily go in a crate on her own, but if they dare tried to close the door, she used her voice. And guess what her voice got? It got the door open. "Oh, sorry. Did I close the door and you didn't want the door closed?"

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And so, very early on that puppy learned the power of the vocalization. And so, then they would take this puppy on the road with them. They traveled quite a lot. The first time they went in a hotel, and they knew they couldn't put the dog in a crate, they decided they were going to go down to the restaurant for supper. So, they would put the dog in a bathroom.

Now, how many of you have ever put your dogs in the bathroom in a hotel? I have a question for you. At home, is that a place that you'd conditioned as a really good place so [the dog would be super relaxed](#)?

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If you're like most people the answer is, "Yeah, no, Susan, I didn't think of that." Yeah. That's why a lot of dogs trash bathrooms, pull down shower curtains, and I digress. My friend's dog, they put the dog in the bathroom. "Oh, Susan, we gave her bed and gave her some water and we gave her a bone."

And then they stood outside the hotel room and the dog whimpered a little bit as she would, "I'm in a bathroom. What? Like, what am I going to do in this bathroom? You're always in the bathroom. If I'm ever in the bathroom, but you're not in the bathroom, why aren't you in the bathroom?"

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So, the whimpering turned to, *bark "Where are you?" *bark "I'm in the bathroom by myself. This is weird. Are you watching TV?" *bark "I should be out there."

And they stood outside in the hallway, heard the whimpering, heard the barking, and when the barking got more insistent, louder, and with more frequency, they went through the door, released the dog from the bathroom and ordered room service.

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And that is an example of how vocalizing in a dog can be reinforced. There are several examples right there. And so, now that we have dogs who potentially have been reinforced for barking or potentially have some emotional needs that aren't being met, "Susan, what can we do?"

That my friend is going to be the topic of our next podcast episode. But before you go, please celebrate. We're going to do a live next week to celebrate our 100,000th YouTube subscriber. And I really would love for you to join me.

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We're going to send out an email, let everybody know, time and place. So, go on over to our website dogsthat.com, subscribe to our newsletter so we will keep you informed. Also, if you're listening to this podcast, anywhere that you can leave a review, this would be a great time to do it.





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While we're celebrating our 100,000th YouTube subscriber, I would love to get your feedback on what you're thinking of each and every podcast episode we put out. If you've never taken the time to rank us, say something that rhymes with hive star review, I don't want to tell you what to do, but just leave us a, just a line.

Let us know how we're doing. And are these podcast episodes landing with you? Be sure to jump over to YouTube and join us in our celebration. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

[YouTube Video: 15 Ways To Exercise Your Dog](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Training Games With Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 220: Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies](#)

[Podcast Episode 71: Pro Dog Trainer's Secret to Help Your Naughty Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 157: Dog Body Language: Understanding Canine Communication Signals And Emotions](#)

[Podcast Episode 200: Solve Your Dog's Separation Anxiety With FRIDA: Expanding Calm With Functional Relaxation](#)

[Podcast Episode 168: Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1](#)

[Podcast Episode 88: Barrier Frustration: Help for Fence Fighting, Leash Reactivity and Window Guarding](#)

[Podcast Episode 188: Why You Should Change Your Strategy Rather Than Your Criteria When Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 205: The Hidden World Of Reinforcement For Dogs And Why You Need To Know](#)

[Podcast Episode 191: Get Your Dog To Calm Down With This Common Sense Protocol For Relaxation](#)



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About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



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