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CANINE VOCAL LANGUAGE

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Dogs communicate with the world around them in **all** kinds of ways. An especially important aspect of canine communication to understand is how they vocalize, which can include barking, growling, and whining. While a dog's reason for vocalizing in these ways may vary, it's crucial to understand how and why dogs are communicating.



Photo by Amber Allen | www.goblinchild.com

Barking

Dogs bark for **all** kinds of reasons – out of excitement, fear, stress, and boredom, to name a few. For dogs that bark excessively, the first step is to understand the root cause of the barking. While quick fixes like citronella collars and shock collars might suppress your dog's barking in the moment, they can increase a dog's stress and anxiety, leading to **all** kinds of behavioral problems, including aggression. Learn more about why your dog barks and how to modify the behavior if your dog is *barking too much*.

Growling

Although it can be frightening when a dog growls or bares his teeth at you, a growl is essentially a warning. Most dogs that growl are actually trying to prevent biting, so good positive trainers always appreciate when a dog inhibits his bite and replaces it with a growl. If your dog is growling at you, he is likely trying to warn you that something you're doing is making him nervous or uncomfortable.

Punishing a dog for growling increases the chances he will not warn you next time and go straight to bite.

Some dogs are more vocal than others, and growl during play or when they are overly excited. If you are concerned about your dog's growling, *consult a positive trainer* to help you determine the cause.

Whining

Whining is a vocalization that dogs practice from a young age to express their need for a resource or attention. While the sound of a whining dog can be irritating, try to remember that it's a sign your dog is trying to communicate with you.

Dogs may whine because they are...

- Hungry
- Thirsty
- Bored
- Need to go outside
- In pain
- Uncomfortable or stressed
- Uncertain

Whining is a normal behavior and will usually fade as a dog grows but if you have any concerns about your dog's whining, consult a *positive trainer* near you.

Bottom Line

While dogs communicate with us and other dogs through many means, their vocal language is an important element to comprehend and interpret. Sometimes excessive vocalization by your dog can be annoying, but it's never a good idea to punish him for vocalizing. In a best case scenario, you're damaging the ability to communicate effectively with your dog, while in a worst case, punishing any dog for something like growling can be a downright dangerous move which might convince him to progress straight to a bite.

Related Reading:

- *Barking*
- *When Aggressive Behavior Doesn't Mean an Aggressive Dog*
- *Not So Great Expectations*

Tags: *barking, canine vocal language, canine vocalization, dog barking, dog communication, understanding dogs, vocalization*

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