



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Whining

Cause

Many dogs whine when left alone. Puppies often whine and cry when separated from their guardian. The puppy is afraid he is being abandoned by his “pack” and is sounding the alarm so that he can be rescued. Excessive whining continues because the dog has learned that all he has to do is whine, cry, or bark to get whatever he wants -- attention, food, affection. What starts out as a demand for attention soon becomes habit.

Treatment

To prevent this annoying habit, teach your dog to accept short periods of confinement before leaving him alone for long periods. Spend time with the dog in the area where he is left and show him that this is a fun place. If he starts to whine or cry when you leave, don't rush back to let him out or reassure him. If you do, he will learn that he can control you with vocal, emotional blackmail. If he does bark, whine, or complain, he probably is not yet comfortable in his confinement area. Spend a little more time with him there. Then, when you leave, if he barks or whines, give him a firm but calm “NO!” After he has been quiet for a few moments, return and praise him lavishly.

Practice leaving and returning several times, so he becomes accustomed to your departures and realizes that you are not abandoning him forever and that you will return. Practice leaving him for longer and longer periods, but start out by leaving for just a few minutes, then returning to let him out -- but only if he's quiet. See our flyer on *Separation Anxiety* for further information.

If your dog is whining when you are at home, either for attention or just out of habit, provide him with daily routines of play, exercise, and training. Often, these special times of undivided attention will stop the dog from whining for the rest of the day. Ignore him whenever he begins demanding your attention. Each time you give in to your dog's demands, you are training him to continue demanding. If you want a few moments of peace, you can teach the dog to be quiet on request. Gently ask your dog to please “Be quiet.” If he ignores you and continues whining, say “BE QUIET!” louder squirt the dog in the face with water. After a few repetitions, he will get the idea and obey the first gentle request of “Be quiet,” rather than waiting for the loud voice or the spray of water.

Unusual whining or whining that starts suddenly when it never existed before may be your dog's way of telling you that he is uncomfortable or in pain. See your veterinarian right away to be sure no health problems exist.

For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.