Bark, Body & Context Worksheet

Read your dog's bark alongside body language, the situation and their usual baseline.

This worksheet records observations, not conclusions. No app or AI bark classifier can tell you what your individual dog is feeling. If what you write worries you, bring this sheet to your veterinarian — only they can diagnose.

Step 1 — Your Dog's Usual Baseline

DOG'S NAME

DATE BASELINE NOTED

HOW MY DOG USUALLY SOUNDS

RELAXED BODY (TAIL, EARS, POSTURE)

HOW MY DOG GREETS ME AND VISITORS

NORMAL DAY (SLEEP, APPETITE, STAIRS, PLAY)

Step 2 — Compare Real Moments to the Examples

Write facts, not labels ("ears back, tail tucked," not "angry"). In the last row, note whether this was your dog's usual self or something different.

1 · The Doorbell Burst

CLUE	EXAMPLE	WHAT I HEARD, SAW OR NOTICED
Bark	One sharp burst, then 3–4 fast, mid-to-low barks at the door.	
Body	Head up, weight forward, ears pricked, tail high, body stiff.	
Context	Doorbell, knock or car door — nothing has come inside.	
Vs. baseline	Reads as an alert bark: reporting a change at the boundary.	

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2 · The Bark That Starts the Second You Leave

CLUE	EXAMPLE	WHAT I HEARD, SAW OR NOTICED
Bark	Starts within a minute of the door closing; repetitive, may howl.	
Body	Pacing, drooling, scratching at the door, tail down, ignores a puzzle.	
Context	You have gone; a camera shows it started as you put on your shoes.	
Vs. baseline	Points to distress, not mischief — film it and talk to your vet.	

3 · The High, Spaced-Out Bark From the Couch

CLUE	EXAMPLE	WHAT I HEARD, SAW OR NOTICED
Bark	Short, higher barks with gaps, each followed by a glance at you.	
Body	Loose and wiggly, tail sweeping, mouth open, maybe a play bow.	
Context	You are sitting still; leash or toy in view, or dinner is late.	
Vs. baseline	Reads as a request, not a warning — the pause-and-look is the tell.	

4 · The Bark When You Touch a Hip or Take the Stairs

CLUE	EXAMPLE	WHAT I HEARD, SAW OR NOTICED
Bark	A sudden yelp or low growl-bark, seemingly out of nowhere.	
Body	Stiffening, flinching, lip licking, whale eye, avoids stairs or jumps.	
Context	Nothing frightening happened — it came with movement or touch.	
Vs. baseline	Possible pain signal, not disobedience — book a vet visit.	

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5 · The 3 a.m. Bark From an Older Dog

CLUE	EXAMPLE	WHAT I HEARD, SAW OR NOTICED
Bark	Monotonous, low, seemingly purposeless — the same sound.	
Body	Wandering, staring at a wall, hesitant on stairs, slow to name.	
Context	At night, in a dog who has never been a night barker.	
Vs. baseline	Worth a conversation with your vet rather than a training trick.	

Bringing It Together

If several rows differ from usual — especially examples 2, 4 or 5 — book a veterinary visit and bring this sheet plus your Bark Log. If everything matches baseline, you've documented your dog's normal, which makes future changes easy to spot.

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR MY VET OR TRAINER

Sources: Kaunas University of Technology bark-classification research (Prof. Rytis Maskeliūnas), via Newsweek, Sep 30, 2026 · Hare & Woods, The Genius of Dogs (Dutton, 2013).

Log every bark episode: The Bark Log — dognition.com/bark-log

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