The Bark Log

A recording sheet for bark context, body language and triggers

Observe · Record · Ask — this sheet organizes what you see. It does not diagnose your dog.

When your dog barks, the sound is only one piece of the story. This sheet helps you write down the rest of it — what was happening, what your dog's body was doing, and what set the bark off — so you and your veterinarian or trainer are working from the same record instead of from memory.

Read this first

You are collecting observations, not conclusions. Fill in what you saw and heard. Leave the interpreting for later.

AI bark classifiers are not a diagnosis. The published research behind them analyzed recordings of German Shepherds sorted into controlled categories, and reports patterns across a group of dogs — not a reading of any one animal. A label like "angry" or "lonely" from an app describes a statistical match with a sound pattern, not what your dog is feeling.

Only your veterinarian can diagnose. Pain, illness and behavior disorders have to be ruled out or identified by a professional. A sudden change in barking is a reason to book a visit, not to search for a label.

DOG'S NAME _____

BREED / TYPE _____

AGE _____

DATE YOU STARTED THIS LOG _____

CURRENTLY SEEING A VET / TRAINER? _____

MEDICATION OR SUPPLEMENTS? _____

How to use it: write the entry within a minute of the bark, while it is fresh. Describe the scene before you guess the feeling. Do at least five entries before you look for a pattern — one dramatic bark is not a trend.

Every entry answers three questions

1 · What was happening?

Where everyone was, what your dog was looking at, what had just changed. Describe the scene, not the mood.

2 · What did the body say?

Tail, ears, eyes, posture, mouth. Body language usually starts before the bark does — write which came first.

3 · What happened next?

What you did, and what your dog did after. A bark that stops when you move is doing a different job than one that keeps going.

And one thing to leave out

Don't write "my dog is angry/spiteful/lonely" in the log. Put the facts in now; the words can come later, with your veterinarian.

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Bark entries

One row per bark. Short notes are fine — "kitchen, mail slot clicked, tail up, 3 barks, I said 'quiet', she stopped" is a complete entry.

DATE & TIME	WHAT WAS HAPPENING (CONTEXT)	BARK (PITCH · PACE · LENGTH)	BODY LANGUAGE (TAIL, EARS, EYES, POSTURE)	TRIGGER YOU SAW	WHAT YOU DID & WHAT HAPPENED

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Tick what you actually saw, not what you expected to see. If two boxes fit, tick both — mixed signals are normal and worth writing down.

Body language quick check

Relaxed & playful

- ☐ Loose, wiggly body
- ☐ Soft, half-closed eyes
- ☐ Mouth open, relaxed
- ☐ Play bow
- ☐ Tail loose, sweeping
- ☐ Rolls over easily

Aroused & frustrated

- ☐ Stiff, frozen body
- ☐ Weight forward on toes
- ☐ High, fast tail
- ☐ Hard, fixed stare
- ☐ Ears pricked forward
- ☐ Panting without exercise

Fearful or anxious

- ☐ Tucked tail, low body
- ☐ Ears pinned back
- ☐ Whites of eyes shown
- ☐ Trembling or shaking
- ☐ Drooling, lip licking
- ☐ Trying to hide or escape

Alert & territorial

- ☐ Head up, body still
- ☐ Ears toward the sound
- ☐ Sudden single bark
- ☐ Moves to the window
- ☐ Guarding a spot or item
- ☐ Stops eating to listen

Bark descriptors

Pitch	high · mid · low · broken
Pace	single · slow · repetitive · rapid
Length	one burst · minutes · on and off
Onset	sudden · gradual · after a sound
Volume	quiet · loud · rising
Stopped when…	you moved · you spoke · ignored

Common triggers — tick what you have seen

Triggers at home

- ☐ Doorbell or knocking
- ☐ People passing the window
- ☐ Other dogs (seen or heard)
- ☐ Being left alone
- ☐ Door, gate or handle sounds
- ☐ Food preparation
- ☐ Toy or treat comes out
- ☐ A specific person

Triggers elsewhere

- ☐ Strangers at the door
- ☐ Handling, nails, grooming
- ☐ Car rides or the leash
- ☐ Vacuum, appliances
- ☐ Children or running
- ☐ Night or outside sounds
- ☐ A closed door or crate
- ☐ Nothing obvious

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Weekly pattern review

Do this once a week, with your entries in front of you. Answer in a phrase, not a theory — the point is to hand your veterinarian or trainer something concrete.

THE TRIGGER THAT SHOWED UP MOST OFTEN:

THE TIME OF DAY IT HAPPENED MOST:

WHAT USUALLY MADE IT STOP:

WHAT MADE IT WORSE:

THE BODY LANGUAGE THAT APPEARED FIRST:

IS THIS WEEK BETTER, WORSE OR THE SAME? WHY DO YOU THINK:

When to bring in a professional

Bring this log to your veterinarian or a qualified trainer. The pattern across a week or two matters more than any single bark.

Book a veterinary visit promptly if barking changes suddenly, comes with pacing, drooling, accidents or restlessness, your dog seems confused or disoriented, or you suspect pain.

Get help straight away if your dog is hurting themselves, trying to escape a crate or room, or the distress is severe.

What this log cannot do

It cannot tell you why your dog barks, and it is not a diagnosis. Even a good AI classifier was trained on other dogs — often a single breed — and reports how a sound matches a pattern seen across a group. Your dog is one animal with their own history, health and home. Use the log to describe, then ask your veterinarian to interpret.

Sources

Machine-learning analysis of dog vocalizations by Professor Rytis Maskeliūnas and colleagues, Faculty of Informatics, Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), Lithuania — reported in "Your Dog's Bark Could Be Telling You Something, Study Finds" by Liz O'Connell, Newsweek, 30 September 2026.

Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods, The Genius of Dogs (Dutton, 2013), on how dogs evolved to communicate with people. Related Dognition guides: separation anxiety in dogs, how to train a dog to stop barking, and why dogs eat poop.

Curious how your dog thinks? Try the Dognition Assessment at dognition.com/how-it-works

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