

Dog Body Language



Dogs are always communicating with us about how they are feeling, through their body language. It's up to us, the humans helping the dogs, to know what they are telling us.

This video is a very valuable demonstration as to why it can be so important for us to be able to accurately interpret dog body language:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABDrhNBwdpk>

What's most important to understand is that dog body language is contextual; what is going on around the dog can be as important as the dog's behavior itself. What may seem like the same behavior may mean very different things under different circumstances.

A dog may raise her paw to indicate that she is anxious, or to show that she wants to play. The same may be true of growling, jumping up and many other behaviors. So, while it is very important to look at the behavior, it's equally important to look at what's going on in the situation to help us know what a dog is likely feeling.

On the next page is a list of body language signals frequently displayed by dogs. There are a lot! And this is by no means a complete list. But it's a good starting point.

A good resource for helping to learn to decode dog body language is at www.ispeakdog.org



Dog Body Language by Category

Not intended to be exclusive or comprehensive! This is a starting reference resource.

Relaxed

- Soft eyes
- Loose body
- Ears back
- Tail half mast
- Open mouth
- Slow wag
- Fast wag
- Wiggle
- Approach
- Investigate
- Lick handler
- Pant
- Tail high
- Hackles raised
- Weight forward
- Flat out running
- Dilated pupils
- Chin over
- Paw
- Stare
- Smile
- Teeth chatter
- Submissive (excited) urination

Play

- Sniff dog
- Paw lift
- Ears up and back
- Play bow
- Bouncy running
- Roll over (self handicap)
- Mount
- Hump
- Stalking
- Bark
- Growl
- Whine
- Jump up
- Muzzle punch
- Chin over

"Arousal"

- Approach/avoid
- Ears up
- Head high

"Appeasement"

- Ignore
- Move slowly
- Tap out (show belly)

Displacement (Stress)

- Yawn
- Blink
- Urine mark
- Scratch self
- Sniff self
- Stretch
- Sit
- Lay down
- Sniff ground
- Shake off
- Groom self
- Pace

Distress/fear

- Close mouth
- Stiff body
- Head turn
- Weight back

- Avoid
- Move away
- Lip lick
- Whale eye
- Tremble
- Tail low
- Tail tucked
- Sweaty paws
- Paw lift
- Exhale (cheek puff)
- Drool
- Hide
- Cower
- Escape attempt (climb wall, stand in corner)
- Pee and/or poop (fear)
- Pant (fast)
- Whine
- Dilated pupils
- Hackles raised
- Bark
- Freeze
- Head low
- Hard eye
- Ears back
- Corners of mouth forward or back
- Growl
- Lip curl
- Snarl
- Snap
- Muzzle punch
- Lunge
- Bite