

How To Read Your Dog's Body Language

Over the years dogs have evolved an elaborate system of body language, facial expressions, and vocalizations to communicate with each other and all of these signals are easily understood by other dogs, just as they could/should be by their human counterparts.

AGGRESSIVE

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Forward or back, close to head. |
| Eyes | Narrow or staring challengingly. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Lips open, drawn back to expose teeth bared in a snarl. Possible jaw snapping. |
| Body | Tense. Upright. Hackles on neck up. Completely Dominant position. |
| Tail | Straight out from body. Fluffed up. |
| Vocalization | Snarl. Growl. Loud bark. |

ALERT

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Perked-up. Turning to catch sounds. |
| Eyes | Open normally or wide. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Mouth closed or slightly open with teeth covered. |
| Body | Normal. Possibly standing on tiptoe. Slightly Dominant position. |
| Tail | Up. Possibly wagging. |
| Vocalization | None. Low whine or alarm bark. |

ANXIOUS

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Ears | Partially back. |
| Eyes | Slightly narrowed. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Mouth closed, or slightly open in a "grin." |
| Body | Tense. Slightly lowered in a Submissive position. |
| Tail | Partially lowered. |
| Vocalization | Low whine or moaning-type bark. |

CURIOUS/EAGER/EXCITED

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Perked-up, forward-pointing. |
| Eyes | Wide open. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Mouth open, teeth covered. Possible panting. |
| Body | Normal stance. Possible wiggling, standing on tiptoe, or pacing. |
| Tail | Up. Wagging. |
| Vocalization | Excited short barking, whining. |

DOMINANT

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Up straight or forward. |
| Eyes | Wide open, staring. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Mouth closed or slightly open. |
| Body | Very tall posture. Hackles may be up. |
| Tail | Stiffened and fluffed. Up or straight out from body. |
| Vocalization | Low, assertive growl or grunt. |

FEARFUL

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Laid back flat and low on head. |
| Eyes | Narrowed, averted. Possibly rolled back in head, whites showing. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Lips drawn back to expose teeth. |
| Body | Tense. Crouched low in submissive position. Shivering, trembling. Possible secretion from anal scent glands. |
| Tail | Down between legs. |
| Vocalization | Low, worried yelp, whine, or growl. |

FRIENDLY

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Perked-up. |
| Eyes | Wide open. Alert look. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Relaxed, possibly slightly open, "smiling" mouth. |
| Body | Normal posture. Still, or possible wiggling of whole rear end. |
| Tail | Up or out from body. Wagging. |
| Vocalization | Whimpering, yapping, or short, high bark. |

PLAYFUL/HAPPY

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ears | Perked-up and forward, or relaxed. |
| Eyes | Wide open. Sparkly/merry-looking. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Mouth relaxed and slightly open, teeth covered. Excited panting. Relaxed, or front end lowered, rear end up in the air, wiggling in a play-bow. |
| Body | Excited bouncing and jumping up and down. Circling around and running forward and back in an invitation to play. |
| Tail | Wagging vigorously. |
| Vocalization | Excited barking. Soft play-growling. |

SUBORDINATE (SUBMISSIVE)

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Ears | Down, flattened against head. |
| Eyes | Narrowed to slits or wide open, whites showing. |
| Mouth/Teeth | Lips pulled way back from teeth in a "grin". Nuzzling or licking other animal or person on face. |
| Body | Lowered to ground, front paw raised. Lying on back, belly up. Possible urine leaking/dribbling. Possible emptying of anal scent glands. |
| Tail | Down, between legs. |
| Vocalization | None, or low, worried whining. Possible yelping/whimpering in fear. |