

## How to Understand What Your Dog is Saying to You



It is very common for dog owners to find living with and training dogs to be somewhat frustrating on occasion, as it is not always clear exactly what the dog is thinking, or what is wanted from you. After all, your dog can't verbally tell you what's going on in his or her life.

The secret is understanding that a dog's body language can tell you almost as much about what your dog is trying to communicate as speech or writing. Dogs communicate very clearly by way of their

- 🐾 Ears,
- 🐾 Tail,
- 🐾 Paws
- 🐾 Mouth,
- 🐾 Breathing
- 🐾 And much more

By understanding these subtleties, you'll find that living with your dog is much more fun, as you'll understand him or her just that much better. You'll be able to get to know your dog's real personality, instead of just guessing at what it might be.

The following are some of the basic dog body language signs, and what they mean. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does get your efforts to understand your dog off the ground, and will help you to learn to observe your dog's behaviors, and

begin associating those gestures with their inner meaning.

🐾 *Dominance* – if your dog is behaving dominantly, you'll note that his or her ears are either standing straight up, or are pushed forward (depending on the ear type of the dog). Your dog's mouth is closed, or only slightly opened. The eyes are wide, or are fixed in a hard stare. Your dog's body will be held in a stiff position, standing tall. The hackles may even be raised. The tail should either be sticking straight out, or is fluffed. If your dog barks, it will be low and assertive in tone.

🐾 *Submissive* – if your dog is being submissive, the ears will be held tightly back. The eyes will be closed or "peeking". One paw raised means extreme submission. The dog may even roll on his or her back, exposing his or her belly to show a very high level of submission. This is not necessarily a happy sensation for your dog, but it is a clear demonstration that s/he will not attack.

🐾 *Friendly* – you can tell if your dog is feeling friendly, because his or her ears will be perked, the eyes will be open and alert, and the mouth is relaxed. The tail, or even the entire back end will often wag. Your dog may whimper,

yap, or give short, relatively high barks out of sheer excitement and happiness.

🐾 *Playful* – when your dog is getting ready to play, the tail will wag, and s/he'll "bow", with the front end slightly or even dramatically lowered as though ready to bounce or spring.

🐾 *Aggressive* – if your dog is behaving aggressively, the ears will be flattened back against the head. The eyes will be narrowed in a "glare" or will look challenging. The body will be held tensely, and the mouth will be open to expose teeth (either just shown, or actually bared in a "curled" muzzle exposure of teeth). The tail will be held straight out from the body, and if possible, it will be fluffed. It is normal for a dog behaving aggressively to growl or snarl.

🐾 *Concerned* – a dog that is worried or feeling concerned will release quick sharp barks that may be combined with growling. The ears should be flattened back against the head, and the hackles may be fully or partially raised. This means that the dog is sensing that something is wrong.

🐾 *Fearful* – if your dog is scared, s/he will lower his or her stance to the point where it may look like a slink or a squat. The tail will be down, or tucked right underneath the body. Your dog's back may be arched. His or her head may be held turned, and the whites of the eyes will show behind dilated pupils. Dogs may bark from fear. This bark is never

deep or threatening, but is higher and worried. This will happen especially when fenced in, cornered, or restrained on a rope or leash.

🐾 *Stressed* – If your dog is feeling stressed out, his or her ears will be pinned down to the back of the head and/or neck. S/he will pant rapidly with lips drawn back. Your dog's shoulders will be lowered, body will be hunched forward, and the tail will be tucked between the hind legs. The haunches will show tension, and your dog may even tremble.

By understanding these basics in doggie "body language", you'll get to know your dog much better, and will enjoy a much more effective communication with him or her.

Knowing what your dog is feeling will also help you to better respond to your dog's needs, and keep him or her out of danger (or keep others out of danger from your dog). It is a wise decision to work at understanding exactly what your dog is trying to say; the rewards are more than worth it.

You'll find more about understanding and training your dog at [www.all-about-puppies.com](http://www.all-about-puppies.com).