

Overview Of Dog Body Language

Always remember that dogs will use several means of communication all at once to convey his message. Always look at the whole dog and keep the behaviors being displayed in the context of the environment.

Whale Eye or Half Moon Eye: This is where you will see a sliver of the whites of the eye. This usually occurs right before a dog is ready to snap or bite. Their pupils may be dilated as well.

Wagging Tail- Is it friendly or not? That depends! If the tail is high, stiff and wagging quickly or not wagging at all chances are he is not in the mood to be friendly. A mid level, relaxed gentle swing back and forth is usually a sign of friendliness while a tucked in tail is a sign of submission or fear.

Toothy Grin or Serious Stuff? If a dog displays a tight-lipped snarl showing only his front teeth, this is a sign you should definitely back off. But if the dog shows you his pearly whites including his molars, has that nice gentle wag about him, chances are he wants to be your friend.

Is it Freezing in here or just my dog? We have to remember that lack of behavior is no behavior as well. When a dog freezes it can mean that they have been alerted to something in the area or they are about to bite if further provoked.

Hackles Up! When a dog raises the fur on his back it can mean several things. The technical term is called “piloerection” and is a means of making an assertive dog look bigger in the event of a challenge or it can simply be the dog is over excited and over stimulated.

Shake it Off! We sometimes see a dog shaking it off as though he just got out of the water. This can be a sign of stress actually that you will see sometimes during play between two dogs that has got a bit out of control or if a dog doesn't like how he is being petted.

Yawning..are you tired? Humans usually interpret this as the dog being tired because that's how we feel at certain times of the day. What your dog is trying to tell you is that he is stressed in the context of the moment. This can be seen during a training session or for some dogs it's a certain way they are being petted.

Eyebrows- Bert or Ernie? A dog can use all parts of his face to communicate. If you see a dog that has well defined eye brows he is more than likely on alert or trying to show his status. A dog that is calm and relaxed will not have any eyebrow definition.

Paw Prints- Ever wonder why your dog will leave paw prints on the floor or cement when there isn't a drop of moisture around? This is another sign of stress. The feet are the only way for your dog to actually sweat.

Good Growl! Growls are pretty obvious for the most part but being tuned into the pitch and tone of the growl is what is important. Some dogs are very vocal when they play and mean no harm. A serious growl could come with a lowered head, whale eye, body freeze among other things. NEVER correct a growl. It's your dog's first line of defense to increase distance between them and trigger. If you continue to correct a growl the dog will stop, however, next time he feels threatened he will not give any warning signs and go straight for the bite.