



Canine Communication

Communication between you and your dog is critical in training and maintaining a healthy relationship with your dog. This article will help you understand the ways that your dog is already communicating with you, and your role in communicating with your dog.

Bonding and Relationships

Bonding occurs when your needs are met by others, and vice-versa:

- 🐾 Your desire for cuddles, longing stares, and puppy breath.
- 🐾 The puppy's desire for affection, food, toys, and exercise.
- 🐾 This happens through communication and is crucial to a good relationship.
- 🐾 Relationships are a state of being connected:
- 🐾 Occurs through communication, patience, observation, and so on.
- 🐾 You want to strive to build and maintain a relationship with your puppy.

As your puppy's caretaker, it is your responsibility to:

- 🐾 Observe your puppy's body language (what are they saying or feeling?)
- 🐾 View the situation:
- 🐾 Is it safe?
- 🐾 Will it become overwhelming?
- 🐾 Is it age appropriate?
- 🐾 Anticipate your puppy's likely response.

Communication Methods

Humans communicate through verbal language, written words, body language, and sign language. Dogs communicate through body language, vocalization, and sense of smell.

Understanding canine communication will help you:

- 🐾 Read your puppy:
- 🐾 How does your handling affect your puppy?
- 🐾 How does the environment affect your puppy?
- 🐾 Judge how to handle your puppy appropriately for the situation.
- 🐾 Read your puppy's emotional state (body language).
- 🐾 Anticipate your puppy's response to stimuli.
- 🐾 "Talk" to your puppy.

Body Language

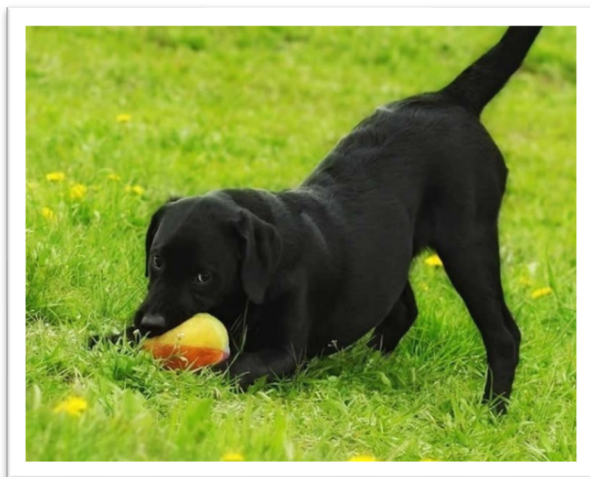
This is the easiest way for you to read your puppy. No single signal can tell you what your puppy is thinking, you need to observe your puppy's full body. Body language can be very obvious, or very subtle.

Here are some examples of different emotions and how dogs communicate them through body language.

Relaxed

- 🐾 Head up
- 🐾 Ears up but not forward
- 🐾 Eyes soft
- 🐾 Mouth open
- 🐾 Corner of mouth relaxed
- 🐾 Weight equally distributed
- 🐾 Hair down



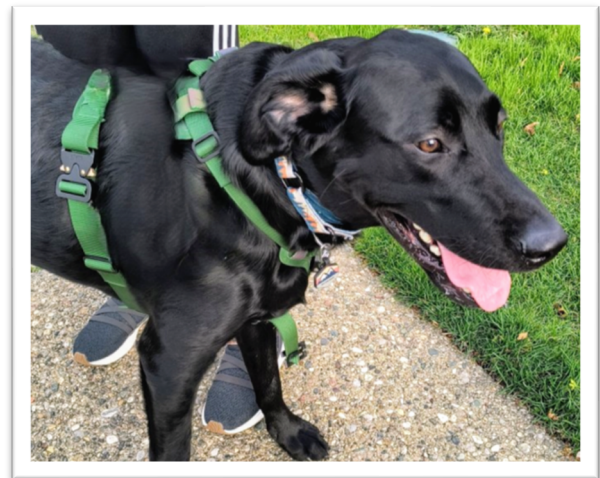


Playful

- 🐾 Ears up
- 🐾 Eyes moving
- 🐾 Lips relaxed
- 🐾 Leaning back, weight shifted to rear
- 🐾 Front foot may bat at target
- 🐾 Tail wagging
- 🐾 High, broad, fast
- 🐾 Hair down
- 🐾 May pant, bark or whine
- 🐾 Animated, exaggerated, bouncing movements

Stressed

- 🐾 Drooping head
- 🐾 Ears flat
- 🐾 Eyes squinting or blinking
- 🐾 May lick lips repeatedly
- 🐾 May pant heavily
- 🐾 May yawn frequently
- 🐾 Crouched body
- 🐾 Low or tucked tail
- 🐾 May scratch
- 🐾 Body shake
 - Done for stress relief
 - Usually comes after a stressful situation



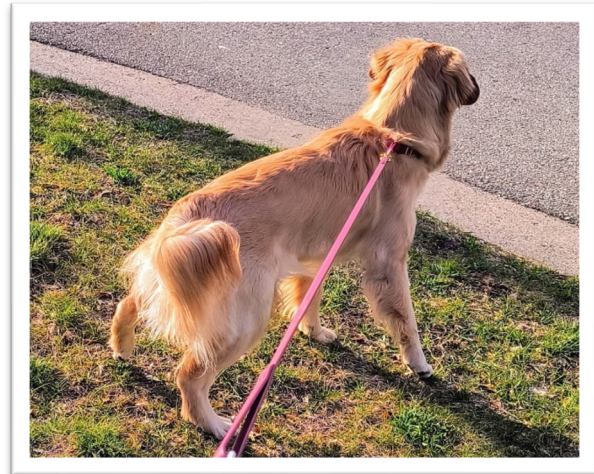
When stressed, dogs may also exhibit calming signals or displacement signals.

Calming Signals

An involuntary reaction that a dog has as a social cue to calm itself or calm others down when stressed. These include yawning, lip licking, rolling to expose stomach.

Displacement Behaviors

Behaviors dogs use to avoid performing a task due to stress. These include sniffing, air scenting, itching at collar, cape, or body.

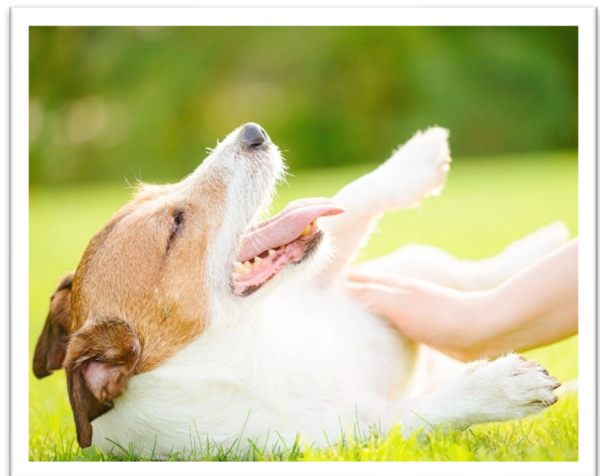


Attentive & Alert

- 🐾 Head up
- 🐾 Ears up
- 🐾 Eyes moving
- 🐾 Mouth closed
- 🐾 Lips relaxed, non-vocal
- 🐾 Tail stiff and vertical or tail moving slowly, aroused
- 🐾 Hair down

Submissive

- 🐾 Head down
- 🐾 Ears down
- 🐾 Eyes down
- 🐾 Lips down, retracted horizontal
- 🐾 Leaning back, weight shifted to rear
- 🐾 May roll to expose stomach
- 🐾 Tail may wag low or horizontally, hang down, or be tucked close to body
- 🐾 Hair down
- 🐾 May whine
- 🐾 May lick other dog's lips





Fearful

- 🐾 Head down
- 🐾 Ears down
- 🐾 Eyes down
- 🐾 Lips down, retracted horizontal
- 🐾 Leaning back, weight shifted to rear
- 🐾 Tail may wag low or horizontally, hang down, or be tucked close to body
- 🐾 Hair down
- 🐾 May whine

Defensive

- 🐾 Head down
- 🐾 Ears back
- 🐾 Showing teeth
- 🐾 Lips down, retracted horizontally
- 🐾 Nose wrinkled
- 🐾 Leaning away/crouched
- 🐾 Stiff, tense body
- 🐾 Tail tucked and still
- 🐾 Hackles raised
- 🐾 May growl



Aggressive



- 🐾 Head high
- 🐾 Ears forward at first
- 🐾 Out and down as escalates
- 🐾 Back when attacking
- 🐾 Eyes fixed, staring at target
- 🐾 Mouth slightly open
- 🐾 Showing teeth
- 🐾 Lips raised
- 🐾 Nose wrinkled
- 🐾 Stiff, tense body
- 🐾 Leaning forward, weight shifted to front
- 🐾 Tail stiff and high over back, tip may quiver
- 🐾 Hackles raised
- 🐾 May growl, snarl and/or bark

Summary

- 🐾 Get to know your puppy as an individual.
- 🐾 Bond, build and maintain a good relationship.
- 🐾 You will make mistakes - that's okay!
- 🐾 Remember to learn from them.
- 🐾 Reading your dog is a lifelong, continuous process.