



AMERICAN
HUMANE

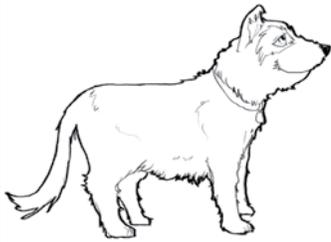
Protecting Children & Animals Since 187

Understanding Dog Body Language



Dogs primarily communicate how they are feeling through their body language. The way a dog holds its eyes, ears, body and tail can tell humans a lot about what the dog may be thinking. While interpretation of dog behavior can be difficult and can vary among individual dogs and situations, the following information should help you better understand your dog.

Neutral



Eyes, ears, mouth, body and tail are all soft and relaxed. Head is up. May be panting and wagging.

Alert or Curious



Eyes are staring and hard. Ears are forward and alert. Mouth is tense and head is up. Weight is shifted forward and body is tense. Fur along back may be raised. Tail is straight, tense and may have a stiff wag. The dog is evaluating the situation, and this may quickly turn into aggression or play.

Playful



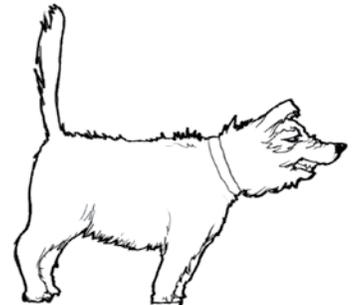
Eyes are alert but soft. Ears are forward and alert. Head is low and mouth may be open. May be barking or panting. Front end is bowing down, with the back end raised and ready to pounce. Body may be wiggling or tense. Tail is up and may be wagging.

Submission



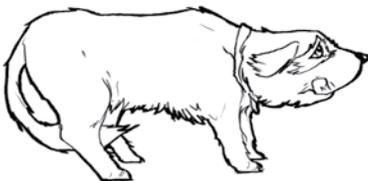
Eyes are soft, ears are flat back and head is low. Corners of the mouth are pulled back and tense, and the tip of the tongue may flick in and out. Body is low and weight is shifted back. Front paw may be raised, and dog may show belly or dribble urine. Tail is tucked, but tip may be wagging.

Assertive Aggression



Eyes are staring and very hard. Ears are forward and tense. Mouth is very tense. Teeth will bare and nose will wrinkle as the threat gets closer. May be growling or barking. Head and body weight are shifted forward, and neck is tense and low. Hair on back may be raised. Tail is high or straight back, and may be bristled or wagging stiffly.

Fear



Eyes are wide with whites showing around the outside, and gaze is not looking directly at the threat. Head is low and ears are flat back. Mouth is tense and may be lip licking or yawning. Body is tense with the weight shifted back. May be trembling or backing away, trying to look as small as possible. Tail is tucked. Fear can quickly escalate into aggression.

Defensive Aggression



Dog is looking out of the corners of the eyes, which are very hard. Ears are back and tense. Mouth is tense, and teeth will bare and nose will wrinkle as the threat gets closer. May be growling or backing away. Head is low and body weight is shifted back. Hair on back may be raised. Tail is low and straight back or tucked, and may be bristled or wagging stiffly.

For more information on
pet behavior issues,
[www.americanhumane.org/
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