

Dog Communication – Are You Listening?

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Dogs have only a few ways to let us know what they are feeling. By understanding these actions will enable us to know when something is wrong with your dog, or they are happy and carefree.

Most devoted dog owners can immediately tell what their dogs are feeling by different body language signals. Most dogs have similar and repetitious signals that are generally easy for someone who understands their dog, will then help understand a friendly dog on the street, or in a dog park, from a potential enemy.

If you are not sure of what a dog is saying check out these few different examples that I have learned from my dogs, Lady and Lola.

A Happy, Friendly Tail Wagging Dog:

The tail will make wide sweeps or almost a circle movement, with the tail hanging down, and not held straight up and wagging stiffly. The ears are relaxed and fur will be smooth down the spine and shoulders. A happy dog doesn't make eye contact, but will sniff and check things out in a relaxed and easy manner. Ask the owner if it is okay to pet their dog after the sniffing routine is finished, then offer the back of your hand to smell first before petting. I usually just stand with my fist turned towards the unknown dog at this point, staying fairly still with my arm hanging down at snout level. I allow the dog to approach me rather than sticking my fist out towards him. So far I haven't had a problem with misinterpreting this action as aggressive.

A Tail Wagging Dog that is Showing Aggression:

If you meet another dog while out with yours, or even if you are just out alone don't assume he is friendly because his tail is wagging. Although the strange dog is not growling, showing its teeth and snapping at you, he can be dangerous. If his tail is stiff and held high, and the ears seem alert, and he stares directly into your or your dog's eyes, then you are encountering a hostile dog. The hackles are raised. - (the fur down the spine and around the shoulders). To prevent attack you should try to quietly remove yourself and your dog quickly, without running of course.

A Happy Playful Pup:

This is my favorite way for Lady or Lola to show me their "mood". It is quite recognizable, even to non dog owners. Let's play. Your dog bows down and rests on the chest and front elbows, with the butt swinging happily up in the air. Sometimes after a short display of this, they get up, bark, run in circles, do a quick roll around, and return to the position. I can never resist this request.

A Very Unhappy Fearful Dog:

The whole body will be lowered, and tucking the tail to cover its scent will be a good indication that your dog is afraid of something. The ears are usually laid back and tight against his head, and the fur is raised along the back and shoulders. If a dog is afraid, then they may bite, but out of fear, not aggression. This is a dog you want to retreat from quietly and quickly.

A Submissive Dog:

Usually a dog that lies on its back, exposing its belly is showing submission, not cowardice. This way the dog gives you the power of pack leader he can relax and enjoy his life of belly scratches, walks, getting a regular meal and playing. These dogs aren't looking for a fight, and are usually laid back and relaxed pets. This type of personality makes a good family member. As long as there are no other symptoms to go along with this behavior that would indicate the dog shows obsessive behavior along with this body language, or is so timid that it hides all the time and is truly a "scaredy dog". I had a sweet, sweet beagle named Susie that was so submissive and afraid of everything that it took over one year just for her to trust me enough to approach me. She stayed mostly under the bed and I was always hunting around the house for her. She had been abused when I got her at the age of 6 months. It took a lot of quiet patience and work but she turned into a wonderful pet and she was with me for 10 years before she died of cancer.

Obviously these few examples above of "dog body language" are just that - a few. Dog's have many actions, expressions and stances that indicate different wants and needs. Most of these are genetically passed on from wild ancestors.

Learning to read the different variations within your dog's body language makes living together a very rewarding endeavor.

Understanding your dog's behavior will increase the bond between you and your dog. Taking care of your dog, and giving him the best, whether it be the best nutrition, or the best medical care or the best emotional connection will make you and your pet both extremely content. Check out my tips and dog information at: <http://recipes4gourmetdogs.com>

Dogs communicate with us through actions, and learning to interpret these traits will drastically increase the happiness and ease of living together. Consider your pet as a family member, and you will be rewarded with the ultimate bond of unconditional love.