

Body Language & Socialization

It's important that we learn to listen to our dogs so that we understand what they need and how we can help them better succeed. By learning to read their body language we are better able to understand their needs and feelings. Body language is important not only for interactions with other dogs but also for interactions with people and new or different environments.

Ears

- Forward - Alert/Listening
- Neutral relaxed- Comfortable
- Curled sideways- with a soft face inviting attention
- Back -worried/nervous

Eyes

- Staring- Worried/escalating to a reaction
- Glance and away- letting it go/or avoiding
- Slow blinking - calming
- Soft/ lidded - content/calm

Forehead

- Smooth- calm
- Wrinkled - concerned

Mouth

- Open
 - A loose, panting, low sound, deeper breathing, tongue hanging out further
 - Tense, fast pant, tongue nearly all in the mouth, higher pitch, shallow breath
- Closed
 - Sniffing (they can't do it while panting), jaw loose
 - Frozen mouth snapped shut and held tightly
- Panting
 - High rate shallow, higher pitch, tongue mostly in the mouth
 - Slower deeper, lower pitch, tongue lolling out
- Body Alignment
 - Straight & stiff like an arrow
 - Curved & loose c- shaped
- Tail
 - Up and Over the back, stiff -Reactive
 - Up and wagging small sweeps - Interested/slightly worried may pop into reactive
 - Up and wagging large sweeps -Inviting
 - Level and wagging- comfortable
 - Slightly lowered small wags - nervous
 - Low and tucked under -scared

Calming Signals or appeasement signals are used by dogs to de-escalate stressful situations or conflicts. It can be directed at any other living creature and sometimes even inanimate objects. Some of these are voluntary and others can also be involuntary responses.

Lip Lick
Yawning
Sniffing
Freezing (look away/lowered)
Slow Blink
Shake off
Look Away
Lean away or lean back (avoidance, flee)
Moving away
Play bow
Stretching
Lowered tail small wag
Scratching
Fiddling with toy/object (including going for a drink/chewing/lick during play)

Signs that behaviour is **headed towards conflict**

Stiff or frozen head on
Unable to look away
Growling
Baring teeth
Tightly closed mouth
Staring, bulging eyes
Forward weight shift
Tail up and over, stiff
Charging forward

Signs that your dog is **happy and friendly**

Soft eyes, slow blinks
Loose tail wagging side to side
Loose body c shaped
Loose movement
Loose pant

Socialization

“The process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society.” This is the meaning of socialization as defined by the dictionary. We often assume it means direct interaction with people or dogs, but instead it means behaving in an acceptable way. An example, it’s not about meeting and greeting dogs face to face, but rather being able to walk by and ignore them when you are out for a walk.

Use what you know of your dog’s body language to determine if they would like to get closer, stay where you are, or if it is time to give them more space!