

Understanding Your Dog's Body Language



A GUIDE TO
DECODE YOUR
PUP'S FEELINGS

CONTEXT:
SEEING THE FULL
PICTURE

A guide to decode your pup's feelings

Dogs don't speak in words – but they're constantly talking.

Through posture, tail position, ears, eyes and even how they move, dogs tell us how they're feeling in every moment.

This guide helps you better understand your dog's behavior, reduce stress, and deepen your bond.



1

Tail Talk:

More Than Just a Wag

Your dog may not speak your language, but their tail sure tries. From excitement to fear, the tail broadcasts what's going on inside—sometimes louder than a bark ever could.

Your job as a pet parent?

Learn the difference between a wag that says **“LET’S GO FOR THIS”** and one that says **“I’m not so sure...”**

What to watch for:



Slow wag, low tail

Curiosity or mild uncertainty. Your pup is observing, thinking things through: **try getting down to their level and calmly engaging**





High tail, stiff wag

Possible tension. This might mean they're on alert or starting to feel territorial: **Gently redirect their attention**



Full-body wag, loose movement

Happiness overload! This is the golden standard of "I'm thrilled to see you": **Give affection, praise, or start a game**



Tucked tail between legs

fear, anxiety, or submission. Your dog may feel threatened or insecure: **Lower your energy**

Your dog's tail is a small storyteller with a big voice. Fast wags, low tucks, or gentle sweeps all carry emotion—but they make the most sense in context. Pair tail signals with overall body language, and you'll read your dog's feelings more clearly and respond with greater care.



2

Ears Don't Lie:

Listening Without a Sound

Ears are like emotional antennas—tuned into the world, constantly adjusting.

When we learn how to **“read” the ears**, we’re not just watching – we’re listening to what our dog is trying to say... without a single bark.

What to watch for:



Ears pinned back, flat to the head

Fear, submission, or discomfort. A sign your dog is feeling unsure or overwhelmed:

Give them space or try redirecting their attention



Ears forward and stiff

Alert and focused. They’ve locked onto something – a sound, a person, another dog: **Gently assess what they’re focused on**



One ear up, one ear down (tilted)

Curiosity or confusion. They're trying to make sense of what they're sensing:

Try a soft command or even just smile



Ears relaxed, following sounds

Calm and content. They're aware, but not concerned: **Simply share quiet time**

3

Eyes & Face:

More Than Just Puppy Eyes

Dogs may not speak, but their expressions speak to us





Whale eyes

(when you can see the whites of their eyes)
Anxiety, stress, or fear. They're uncomfortable but trying to stay still or submissive: **Give space, let them reset.**



Soft eyes, relaxed gaze

Calm and trusting. Your dog feels safe, and their nervous system is regulated: **Sit nearby, pet them gently**



Tense jaw, closed mouth

Alert or stressed. Often comes before barking, lunging, or discomfort: **Redirect their focus with a toy or a calm cue**



Yawning, lip licking or looking away

Calming signals. They're trying to soothe themselves or avoid conflict: **If these appear during social situations, it's their way of saying, "I need a break."**

4

Sounds & Vocalizations:

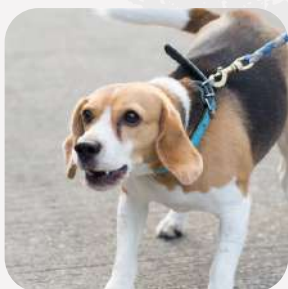
Learning Their Unique Voice

Not all communication is silent. Your dog also speaks through a symphony of sounds.

Dogs don't just bark to **"make noise."** They bark to express feelings, to alert, to play, or sometimes – just to say "I missed you."

Understanding the intention behind the sound can help you meet your dog's needs with more empathy and less frustration.

Common vocal cues:



Short, sharp bark

Alertness. "Something's there!" Often tied to the environment or a sudden noise: **Don't hush every bark, calmly acknowledge it and then guide them to settle.**



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5

Movement & Posture:

When the Whole Body Speaks



Dogs don't just sit or stand – they express. Every movement, every shift in posture, holds meaning. Before interpreting a single gesture, pause and take in the full picture. Posture doesn't exist in isolation – it works alongside facial expressions, ears and tails to communicate an emotion.

Common posture cues:



Loose, wiggly body

Happiness and friendliness. Usually paired with a wagging tail and an open mouth: **Let them come to you, especially new dogs.**



Stiff, upright stance

Tension, alertness, or guarding. This posture says "I'm watching," not always "I'm aggressive": **Give them space and assess what's happening**



Crouched body, lowered head

Fear, submission, or uncertainty. May also signal a readiness to bolt: **Try getting low, speaking gently**



Play bow

(front legs down, rear up) Classic invitation to play. A joyful, universal dog gesture: **Mirror their enthusiasm**

Understanding Context:

Seeing the Full Picture

A **“wagging tail”** can mean joy, stress, alertness... even conflict.

It's the situation, surrounding body cues and your dog's personality that give the wag its true meaning.

If we focus only on single behaviors, we miss the chance to understand what our dogs are really saying



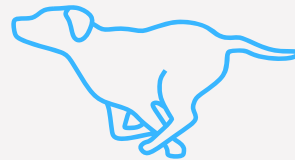
How to interpret context

the right way:



Zoom out - not in

Don't fixate on one signal.
Observe the dog's entire body, the environment and what just happened before the behavior.



Know your dog's baseline

What's normal for your dog?
Some dogs naturally raise hackles during excitement, others don't.



Watch for signals

A dog wagging their tail while growling? Confusing, right? That's when you zoom out and ask: "Are they overwhelmed? Is there a toy or treat involved? Are they unsure?"



Context tells the story words never could

Behavior is a conversation
- and the environment is part of the dialogue.

Strengthening the Bond

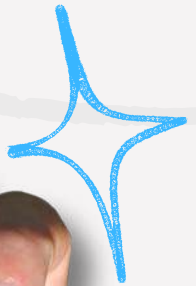
Through Body Language

Understanding your dog's body language isn't just about preventing misunderstandings. **It's about deepening the bond between you and your dog** - one silent conversation at a time.

When you notice and respond to what your dog is feeling, you become their safe space. You're not just the one who feeds and walks them - **you're the one who listens when they can't speak.**

Small actions, big impact:

- 1 **Pause and observe**
- 2 **Respond with presence**
- 3 **Mirror their language**
- 4 **Use moments to connect**



Use moments to connect

Grooming, playtime, even just relaxing together – all become richer when you understand what they're expressing.

It's not just what you do, it's HOW you do it.

Example: After a long day, your dog curls up by your feet. Instead of just petting them absentmindedly, you notice they sigh, relax their ears and glance up at you.

You soften your tone and gently rub their chest the way they like.

That moment?

That's not routine
it's connection.





When we meet our dogs with curiosity and empathy – not assumptions – something beautiful happens:



They feel seen



They feel heard



They feel home

And that's the heart of being a great pet parent.

This wraps up your guide to understanding your dog's body language.

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Final Thought:

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