

Use Your PAWS



Appropriate body language is important working with any animals, but especially foster animals.

- Go slow and make yourself look small
- Avoid making direct eye contact
- Speak quietly and in a "happy" tone
- Approach with your side toward the dog
- Always underhand and never over the head



Personal Space (keep a safe distance)



Ask for Consent (let the dog come to you)



Watch body language (it can change in a second!)



Safety first! **STOP** any time you or the dog don't feel safe.

Consent Test

1

Identify a spot on the dog where you think they like to be pet (we recommend the chest or shoulder)

2

Pet for 3-5 seconds, then STOP

3

If the dog says YES, continue
If the dog says NO, stop



YES = moves closer to you, paws at you for more, nudges you with loose body language

NO = does nothing, shrinks or moves away, shows displacement signals (yawn, lip licks, air sniffs, etc) stiff body language or growls.

Take the "TEMP"

Appropriate body language is important working with any animals, but especially foster animals!

Learn how to quickly understand how a dog may be feeling to prevent accidents and miscommunication from happening!



Tail

A wagging tail does NOT always indicate a happy dog. Understand the position and type of wag.



Eyes

Eyes are the window to the soul! Know the difference between soft, hard and blinking and what they mean.



Ears

Ears can show us what a dog is paying attention to as well as how tense or relaxed one is feeling.



Mouth

Open or closed? Smile or "grimace"? Learn how to read your dog's facial expressions!



Posture

Your dog's emotions can be seen in how they stand and move! Learn how to easily see how your dog is feeling with a quick glance!

Tail

The position of a dog's tail can communicate information about what that dog is thinking and feeling.

Tail wagging can mean many different things!

In general, dogs' tails wag faster as they get more excited, slower as they are less enthusiastic about something, have broader strokes as they are feeling happier, and smaller strokes as they're getting more uptight about something.



Alert and excited



Neutral and exploring



Submissive and concerned



Concerned or unpleasant about person or animal



Excited



Happier



Pleasant about person or animal



Less enthusiastic



Anxious or uptight



*Tail, eyes, ears, muzzle ...
put them together to solve a puzzle*

Eyes

If the eyes are the window to the soul, the way a dog looks at us should tell the story of how one is feeling/thinking.



Whale Eye

Eyes are very wide & round with the whites showing. The dog may also have a wrinkled brow/forehead and may be trying to look away. Similar to the face a human makes when scared or surprised. This generally means the dog is uncomfortable or fearful and should be left alone or approached slowly and with caution.



Soft Eye

A dog's eyes are naturally "almond shaped" and may look like they are slightly squinting. Dogs may not always make direct eye contact, but the forehead should look smooth and relaxed to signal that a dog is content.



Hard Stare

A dog making direct eye contact - non blinking, straight ahead, mouth closed/tight or may wrinkle muzzle & show teeth means the dog feels threatened or defensive and is a warning to slowly move away and leave the dog alone.



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Ears

Dogs have several muscles in their ears that move them in different directions to pick up sounds that humans can't hear. Those muscles also help them move ears to communicate tension, fear and defensiveness to other animals.



Natural

depending on the breed of dog, this can look a lot of different ways. Floppy, upright, or even cropped...but if you look at the muscles at the BASE of the ears (where they meet the dogs head), you should not see any tension.



Back / Down facing

If a dog is pulling the ears back against the head and the ear openings are facing down, this is often a signal that the dog is feeling anxious or afraid.



Back / Open facing

Ears back touching the head always means tension - if the ears are also open facing (you can see the inside), the dog is often trying to let us know that it is uncomfortable



Forward / Upright

The direction a dog's ears are facing is letting us know what it is paying attention to. If the ears are forward and upright, this means there is tension building and the dog may be feeling defensive and can be a sign of danger.

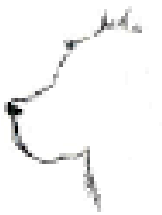


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Mouth & Muzzle

Open or closed? Smile or "grimace"?

Our dogs make facial expressions much like we do!



Mouth Closed

Dog's breath and cool themselves through their mouth, so keeping it closed is not "natural" unless a dog is feeling nervous, stressed or fearful. If you see this, leave the dog alone.



Slightly Open - Lip Licks

Licking lips is one of many ways a dog will try to calm itself down - yawning is another common signal of a dog who may be feeling conflict. If you see this, stay calm and use your "PAWS".



Relaxed, Open Mouth

Open mouth breathing, with the tongue slightly out is a relaxed, happy dog. This will look much like a smile!



Corners Back

When a dog is excited or anxious, the corners of the mouth are pulled farther back than normal. Teeth are visible and the tongue will likely be held back in the mouth. This is more of a "grimace" than a smile and the dog should be allowed/encouraged to calm down.



Wrinkled Muzzle - Teeth Bared

When a dog wrinkles the top of its muzzle, it is purposely showing teeth as a warning. The dog will probably be growling and barking to try to make the "threat" go away. If you see this, move away slowly.

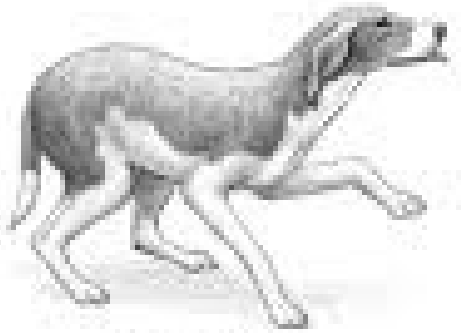


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Posture

How a dog holds itself or approaches something unfamiliar can tell us a lot about how it is feeling AND how we might approach safely.

Low and "Rounded"



If a dog is holding itself low to the ground and leaning backward, it is often feeling fearful, anxious and may want to try to "get away" or roll over into a "belly up" position (it does NOT want a belly rub). It is best to leave it alone until it feels more secure. Tucked tail and "paw lift" are also signals that a dog is afraid and tense.



Relaxed and Loose

Standing up, a relaxed dog evenly distributes weight on all four legs. A relaxed dog will make eye contact, and feels secure enough to also sit or lay down even in new situations and might even approach people or things it is not familiar with for attention.



Upright and "Forward"

A dog that is feeling defensive or threatened will often use its body to look "bigger"...standing very upright, weight distributed on front legs with tail and head held very high. It may even raise the hair on the shoulders, back and rear standing up. This dog is very alert and we should be very cautious and *not* approach.



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