

Dog Body Language 101

Stress Signals (in no particular order):

- 🐾 Lowered Tail/body (crouching)
- 🐾 Stiff or rigid body or movements
- 🐾 Dog won't take treats
- 🐾 Ears back for prick ears or down for drop ears
- 🐾 Slow movements or responses
- 🐾 Urinating/defecating and/or expressing anal glands
- 🐾 Dog avoids eye contact (with human and/or with whatever stresses him)
- 🐾 Freezing in place or dropping into a down and freezing
- 🐾 Pacing, circling or non-stop movement
- 🐾 Zooming full speed (trying to get rid of pent up stress)
- 🐾 Excessive shedding
- 🐾 Excessive drooling (ropes or puddles)
- 🐾 Vocalizations such as whining, "huffing" (raspy panting), moaning or growling
- 🐾 High pitched barking, often frantic sounding
- 🐾 Stretching ("play" bow or full body)
- 🐾 Trembling/vibrating
- 🐾 Hair along the back stands up
- 🐾 Yawning (especially repeatedly)
- 🐾 Licking lips
- 🐾 Penis crowning
- 🐾 Rolling over onto side or back
- 🐾 Resisting pressure on the leash, pulling away (esp. when "fighting like a fish")
- 🐾 Shallow/rapid breathing, holding breath
- 🐾 Muscle ridges around back of the mouth or around the eyes
- 🐾 White showing in the eye
- 🐾 Dilated pupils
- 🐾 Sweaty paws (leaving foot prints)

Signs the dog is trying to calm down others around him:

- 🐾 Looking away from the stressor
- 🐾 Yawning
- 🐾 Moving in an arc when approaching a stressor or unknown
- 🐾 Licking lips
- 🐾 Full body shake as if wet (releasing some tension)
- 🐾 Raising a paw slightly off the ground
- 🐾 Scratching at the neck or side with a hind foot
- 🐾 Sitting or lying down
- 🐾 Sniffing the ground
- 🐾 Blinking more rapidly then normal (relaxed eyes)

Signs that the dog wants a scary or unknown person/thing to move away (can also be pre-fight signals):

- 🐾 Hard stare (maintained for more than 3 seconds)
- 🐾 “On their toes” trying to make themselves appear larger -or-
- 🐾 Lowering the head/neck with staring (as in a border collie stare)
- 🐾 Showing teeth or flexing lips
- 🐾 Ears forward and alert
- 🐾 Aggressive barking
- 🐾 Body tension/stiffness or freezing
- 🐾 Hair over shoulders (or along entire back) stands up
- 🐾 Marking behavior (urination or defecation) often with lots of kicking afterward
- 🐾 Tail held high and wagging stiffly or quickly (sometimes just at the tip of the tail)
- 🐾 Whites in the eye showing

Signs a dog wants to play or get attention:

- 🐾 Entire body relaxed, no tension
- 🐾 Play bow (holding front legs only flat on the ground with butt in the air)
- 🐾 Full wagging tail, relaxed wagging or wagging the tail in a circle
- 🐾 Rolling over (with fully relaxed body) “flopping” on the ground
- 🐾 Pawing gently
- 🐾 Gentle nose bumps
- 🐾 Ears in a relaxed position
- 🐾 Full body wiggle
- 🐾 Grin in the mouth, open mouth with relaxed lips
- 🐾 Happy/playful bark often one bark at a time or a drawn out bark almost a howl

Things dogs do when they are confused about what is expected of them (may indicate excessive stress):

- 🐾 Increased activity (pacing, circling, zoomies, jumping up, humping)
- 🐾 “yappy” stressed barking, may including nipping or biting
- 🐾 Marking behaviors (urination/defecation)
- 🐾 Sniffing the ground
- 🐾 Wandering or running away (avoidance)
- 🐾 Stretching
- 🐾 Yawning
- 🐾 Full body shake (as if wet)
- 🐾 Looking away from the stressor
- 🐾 Biting another object or dog (rapidly biting or shaking a toy, or directing aggression to another dog or person)
- 🐾 Taking treats with a “hard mouth” (biting fingers with the treat)
- 🐾 Seeking attention/reassurance from others (dogs or people)
- 🐾 Hiding (going to a crate, tunnel or under a corner table for example)
- 🐾 Licking the stressor (dog or person) or air licking/lip licking
- 🐾 Rolling on side or back
- 🐾 Freezing in place, often in a down position
- 🐾 Glazed eyes/ “zoned” out