

WHAT IS THAT DOG TRYING TO TELL ME?



When we go out to play together, being able to speak “dog” will help you keep us and others safe. Dogs use our whole bodies to communicate. Here are tips to help you interpret what we’re trying to tell you about how we feel...

RELAXED

No matter how I look, it's better not to greet a dog without asking their owner first. Still, these are signs I'm probably relaxed.

- Sitting or lying in a comfortable-looking position
- Eyes open but not wide or blinking frequently
- Relaxed body
- Mouth open and relaxed



SCARED

When I'm scared, these are signs I might show you that signal you should give me space.

- Tail tucked
- Ears pulled back or flat
- Head down or crouching
- Mouth closed, panting or licking lips
- Blinking rapidly, avoiding eye contact or showing whites of eyes





CALM

Look for these signs, but still be careful not to stand over me, which might make me anxious. And, don't put your face too close to any dog you don't know.

- Wagging or still tail
- Open, relaxed mouth
- Ears up or natural
- Weight evenly distributed

NERVOUS

When I'm feeling anxious, I'll give you signals like these. It's best not to stare at me or try to approach me when I'm uncomfortable.

- Fidgeting or shifting weight back and forth
- Ears back or flat on head
- Tail low or between legs
- Eyes wide or avoiding eye contact
- Yawning, licking lips or panting when not hot



SUBMISSIVE

Sometimes I roll on my back. With my owners, I might be saying I trust them and want a belly rub. But with another dog or someone I don't know, I might be saying I don't want to fight. These are the signs I'm asking for some space.

- Wide eyes
- Avoiding eye contact



AGGRESSIVE

Watch for these signs that I'm feeling threatened or thinking about picking a fight. Back away slowly and avoid eye contact with me. Don't turn your back or run.

- Standing still or rigid
- Barking, growling or showing my teeth
- Lunging at people or other dogs
- Hair raised on my back



PLAYFUL

Dogs play-bow to each other as a sign that we want to play. It looks a little like the downward-dog yoga pose. When I'm in this happy, playful mood, I might get excited and knock down smaller kids.

- Front legs down
- Back end in the air
- Tail up or wagging
- Mouth open



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