

# Understanding Dog Body Language

## Happy/relaxed dog body language

A dog that is displaying happy or relaxed body language isn't feeling stressed, anxious or aggressive. They can be approached with the permission of the dog and the dog's guardian (owner).



### What to look for:

- Head: held high but not tense or fixed.
- Ears: alert and possibly up (depending on the dog's breed).
- Eyes: soft and relaxed (little/no pupil dilation).
- Mouth: relaxed, may be slightly open.
- Tail: in a relaxed position. May wag.
- Body Posture: evenly balanced, soft and wiggly. Not leaning forward or back.



## Playful dog body language

A dog displaying playful body language wants to interact. This often signals a friendly dog - although it pays to be careful as they could accidentally knock you over with their excited play.



### What to look for:

- Head: held up.
- Ears: held up (not forward).
- Eyes: often dilated, but soft.
- Mouth: relaxed, often open with tongue exposed.
- Tail: Held up, sometimes with a loose wag.
- Body Posture: loose and bouncy. They may bow with front lowered with front legs bent. This position is often only held briefly. They may roll onto their back flat on the ground, with their body loose and wiggly.

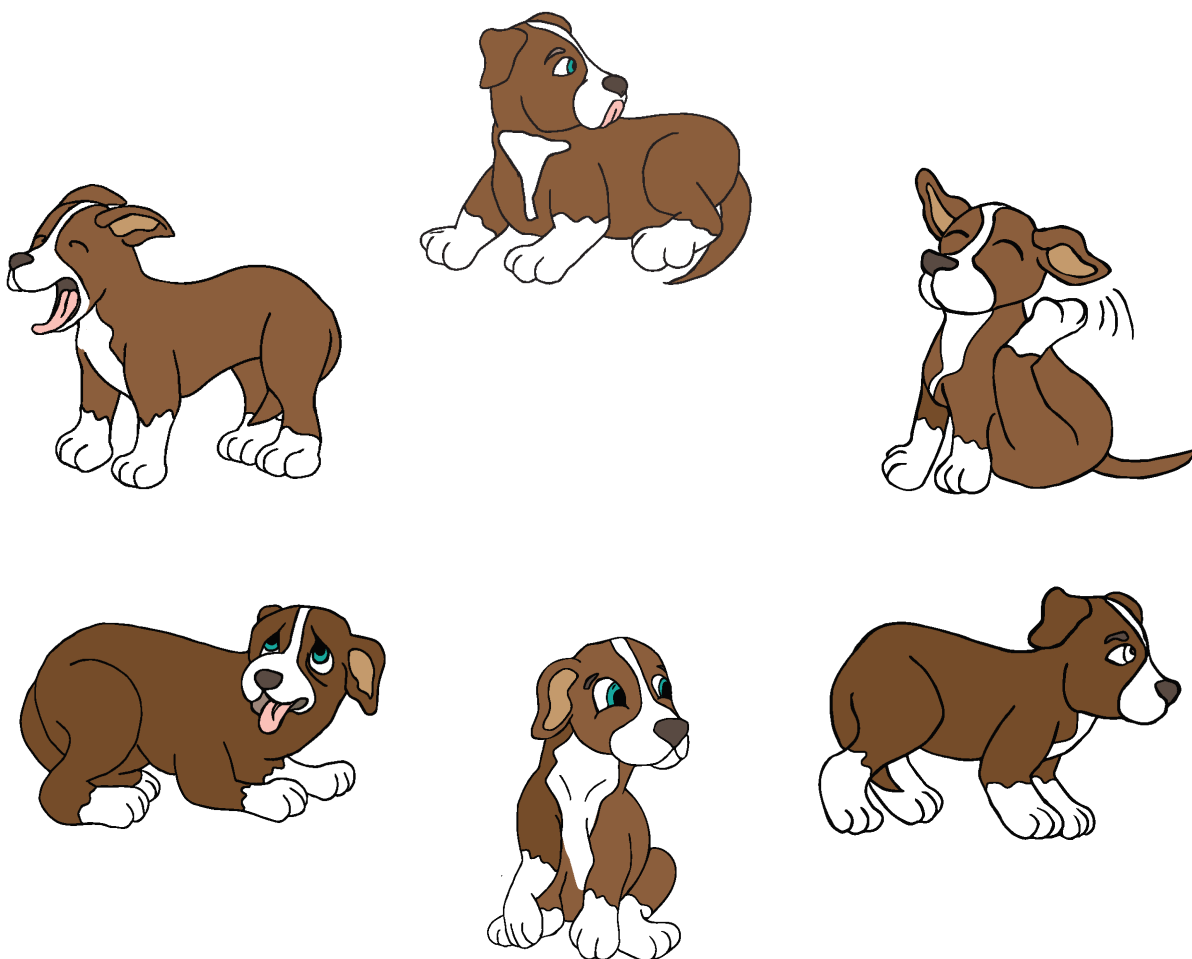
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## Worried/anxious dog body language

A dog with "worried" body language is likely to be feeling under stress. They may also display submissive behaviours. A worried or anxious dog should be given time and space to help them de-stress and relax.

### What to look for:

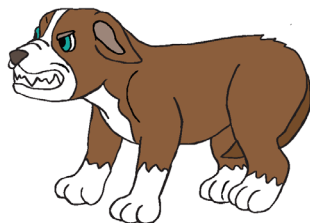
- Head: may face away with brief eye contact.
- Ears: held back towards skull.
- Eyes: pupils are often dilated, may show the whites of their eyes. May avoid eye contact.
- Mouth: may hold lips slightly back and pant. They may yawn, when not tired.
- Tail: held down, often with a slight wag. They may curl underneath their body.
- Body Posture: crouched. Paw may be raised. They may roll onto their back.



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## Fearful dog body language

A dog that is displaying emotionally fearful body language feels threatened by the current situation and wants to get away. They are unlikely to attack unless provoked, but they shouldn't be approached.



### What to look for

- Head: held low with tense jaw.
- Ears: held back towards skull.
- Eyes: pupils are often dilated.
- Mouth: tense jaw with curled lips. They may snarl or show teeth.
- Tail: tense and held down. They may curl underneath their body.
- Body Posture: crouched. Weight often held back to show a desire to move away. Their hackles may be up (hair along the upper neck and back).

## Angry/very unhappy dog body language

A dog displaying aggressive body language wants to chase another dog or person away, or, if needed, to attack. A dog displaying aggressive body language is very likely to attack, they should not be approached or challenged.



### What to look for

- Head: held high and tense.
- Ears: held forward and alert, they may be tilted forward.
- Mouth: tense mouth with bared teeth and sometimes "air snapping", they may snarl.
- Tail: held up and rigid, although may appear to slightly wag.
- Body Posture: stiff legs with a forward lean. Hackles are often raised.