POWER POOCHES

A TO Z of Dog Body Language



A — Averted Gaze

A dog deliberately turning its head or eyes away is often showing appeasement. It's not being rude, it's saying, "I'm not a threat" or "I'm uncomfortable." This is often missed or misunderstood as disobedience.



B — Body Freeze

Sudden stillness or tension in the body is a red flag. Dogs don't freeze for fun. This is often the precursor to an aggressive response or an attempt to make themselves "invisible' in a stressful situation.



C — C-Shaped Curve

A dog curving its body into a loose "C" when approaching another dog or person is offering polite, non-threatening body language. Straight-line approaches can be perceived as confrontational.



D — Drooling (When Not Food Related)

Excessive drooling in a non-food context can indicate stress, nausea, or anxiety. It's a sign that should never be ignored, especially in new environments or training scenarios.



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E — Ears

Ears tell a tale. Forward ears can signal alertness or arousal (positive or negative), sideways ears might mean uncertainty, and pinned-back ears usually signal fear, stress, or appeasement.



F — Furrowed Brow

A wrinkled forehead or tense facial muscles often indicate concern or confusion. Dogs don't wrinkle their brows for style, it's usually a cognitive or emotional signal.



G — Ground Sniffing (Out of Context)

Often a calming signal. Dogs might sniff the ground excessively to diffuse tension, avoid conflict, or communicate that they mean no harm in a charged environment.



H — Hackles Raised (Piloerection)

Raised fur along the back doesn't always mean aggression, it means arousal. Could be excitement, fear, or defensive drive. Read it in context with the rest of the body.



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I — Inhibited Bite



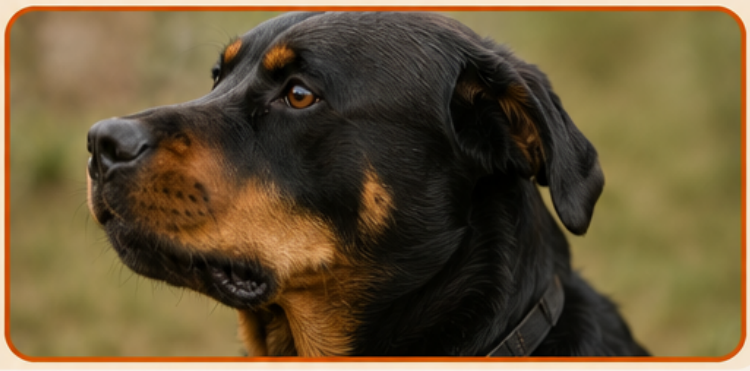
When a dog bites with measured pressure or holds without puncturing, it's a sign of self-control and social awareness. It's not "just playing" if there's still tension in the body.



J — Jaw Tension



A tight jaw, closed mouth, or clamped teeth can signal discomfort or the build-up before a warning growl. A relaxed dog usually has a soft mouth and may pant gently.



K — "Kiss to Dismiss"



A quick lick to the face, often seen in puppies or lower-ranking dogs. It looks affectionate, but it often means "I'm uncomfortable, please back off."



L — Lip Licking / Tongue Flicks



A subtle but common stress signal. Dogs will often lick their lips or flick their tongue when anxious, uncertain, or trying to avoid conflict.



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M — Mouth (Open vs Closed)

A relaxed dog often has a slightly open mouth with soft panting. A tight, closed mouth suggests stress, especially if the dog was panting moments earlier and suddenly closes it.



N — Nose Nudging

Can be affectionate or a bid for attention, but in tense scenarios, it may be a sign of displacement or a redirection strategy, especially if paired with stiff body posture.



O — Over the Shoulder Look

Dogs glancing back at you while walking ahead may be checking in. However, if the head is low and the eyes wide, it could mean concern or uncertainty.



P — Posture (Overall)

Confident dogs have balanced, weight-forward postures. Dogs leaning back, crouching, or making themselves small may be anxious, submissive, or fearful.



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Q — Quick Movements

Sudden, jerky movements usually indicate over-arousal, reactivity, or a build-up of tension. Even playful zoomies can tip into stress release or redirection.



R — Rolling Over (Submissively)

When done slowly with a soft body, it's appeasement. When done quickly and stiffly, it may be defensive, inviting contact could result in a bite.



S — Stiffness

Muscle tension is never a good sign. Whether it's the neck, tail, legs, or whole body, stiff = serious. It's a warning sign the dog is uncomfortable or about to react.



T — Tail (Position and Movement)

A high, tight wag can mean arousal or threat. A low, tucked tail = fear. A wide, loose wag with a wiggling back end = happy and relaxed. Watch the base of the tail, not just the wag.



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U

Unusual Stillness

A normally bouncy dog that suddenly stands still and scans the environment isn't just taking in the view. It could be scenting, assessing, or feeling uneasy.



V

Vocalisations

Growling, whining, barking, or yelping, every sound has a context. Growls are often misunderstood; they're a gift, a warning before action. Don't punish it; listen to it.



W

Whale Eye (Half Moon Eye)

When you can see the whites of a dog's eyes, especially when the head turns away but the eyes stay fixed, it often signals discomfort, fear, or brewing tension.



X

X Marks the Spot (Tail Between Legs)

A tail tightly tucked under can create a visible "X" shape when paired with curved hind legs. A clear indication of fear or stress.



POWER POOCHES

A TO Z of Dog Body Language



Y

Yawning (Out of Context)

A classic calming signal. Dogs yawn when they're stressed, not just tired. In training sessions, it can be a sign to slow down or back off.





Z

Zoomies (Frenetic Random Activity Periods)

Though often cute, zoomies can be a sign of overstimulation or stress release, especially in dogs that don't get enough structured outlets for energy.







The A to Z above offers a broad overview of canine body language, but it's essential to **remember that all dogs are individuals.** **Breed traits, life experiences, environment,** and **temperament** all influence how a dog expresses itself. What may be a sign of stress in one dog could simply be a quirk or habit in another. Context is everything. Learning to read body language is not about memorising a chart, it's about observing, understanding, and building a **relationship with the dog in front of you.** So use this guide as a starting point, **but always let your own dog be your best teacher.**