

Can you speak dog?

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Happy

A happy dog will have relaxed body muscles, and may even have an open mouth or the corners of his mouth might be turned up slightly. Its tail may sway gently from side to side, or be held in a relaxed position. Its ears will be relaxed as well as his facial expressions. If it is lying down, its body weight will be over his entire body.

Aroused

An aroused dog is one who is intensely focused on something (like chasing a squirrel) and ready for action. You may see its ears forward or flattened, mouth closed, body weight on all four legs, tail held high or a low and very deliberate tail wag, tense eyes directed at what it detected, and raised hair on its back. If you see this, it is a bad time to encourage your child to pet the dog.

Anxious or Fearful

Signs of fear include a tail held low or tucked between the legs; ears held sideways for an erect eared dog or flattened back with rapid panting; and tense eyes, likely seeing the whites around the sides; tense body muscles and a center of gravity over the rear legs or to one side. The dog may roll onto its belly in submission; bark and retreat, turn his head or walk away. It may also lower its body so as to be less conspicuous.

The dog may also exhibit displacement behaviors – behaviors that are normal except at a time of conflict – such as yawning, licking of lips, sudden scratching or sniffing of ground, wet dog shake. A dog will show displacement behaviors when it is conflict. It wants to do something but is suppressing an urge to do it.

If your dog growls, this is your dog's warning that he is about to reach his threshold. DO NOT punish the growl.

Bite Warning

If your dog freezes (suddenly becomes stiff), stands with its front legs splayed and head low while looking at you, or curls its lip to show its teeth, stop any interaction with the dog IMMEDIATELY, look away, stand still and allow the dog the opportunity to leave. Do not approach, do not make eye contact, do not talk to the dog. If you are touching the dog, stop and move your hands slowly away. If you are taking something from the dog, let go of it. It is better for it to keep it than for you or a child to get bitten. If you are bending over the dog, slowly straighten up and look away.