

# Canine Body Language

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# Things to keep in mind.

- Be objective. Describe behavior with what the dog is doing. No vague terms.

Lots of people use different terms when describing the behavior that they see.

The terms used here should be the language used within the facility.

- Context is important. Behavior is rarely unprovoked.
- Look at all the dogs involved.
- Some signals are reused in a variety of situations with slight differences.

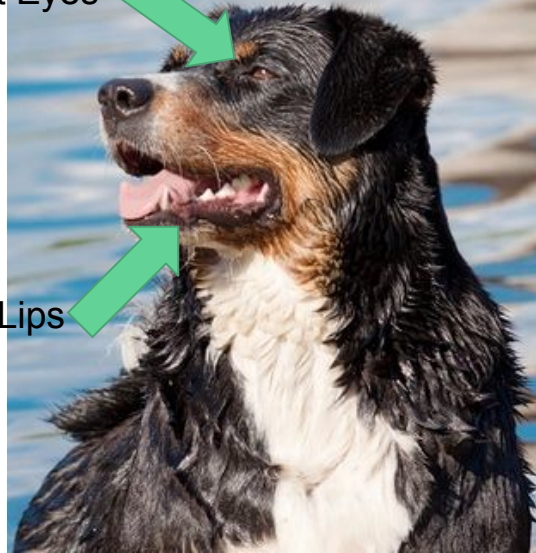
# Relaxed and Confident

Smooth & Relaxed Brow



These dogs are all **relaxed**.  
No wrinkles in the face.

Soft Eyes



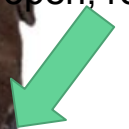
Flat Lips



Eyes are almond shaped or resting, not round or showing the whites of the eyes.

Head is high and alert instead of bowed or hiding.

Mouth open, relaxed



Mouth is open wide and the tongue is relaxed.

# Confidence vs Shyness



# Confidence vs Shyness



This dog is what we would call **Confident**.

- **Relaxed** eyes and body
- Note that he is looking at the camera. Not avoiding it at all.
- He's alert and ready to meet anything that comes at him head on.



# Confidence vs Shyness



This dog is **Shy/Avoident**

Note how unlike Mr. Confidence he's looking away from the camera. Dogs will avoid not only with their eyes but sometimes with their whole bodies. Pulling themselves in the opposite direction of whatever they don't want to be near.

He doesn't want to be seen or noticed. This dog might try to hide or make itself as small as possible (the pancake) to seem like it doesn't exist.

# Play Bows



Rear up with  
horizontal or  
lowered tail.

Just like what it sounds like. This is non-threatening unless you don't like bouncy happy dogs.  
Elbows should be loose and bouncy.  
Ears Forward.  
Direct eye contact.



Bent Elbows

# Excited



A wiggly, bendy boy is a good boy.

Note his loose body language and bent elbows.



# Tails



Rule of thumb for tails.  
The higher the tail the  
higher the  
excitement/arousal. The  
lower the tail, the lower  
the will to interact.  
-Tails are lower generally  
with fear and caution.

- Watch the base of the tail  
not the tip.
- The tail must be  
compared with all available  
language the dog is  
showing.
- A wagging tail is not proof  
of a happy dog. Just high  
arousal



# Piloerection



Indicates a higher level of arousal not aggression.

Look for other body cues to see if it is negative or not



-ears forward, body forward, lips puckered.

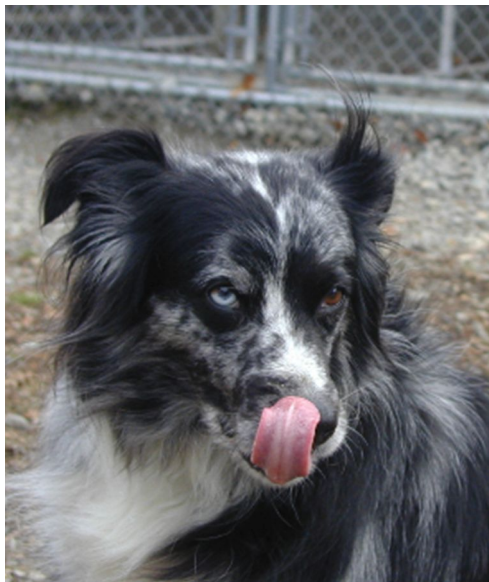
-This dog could be described as showing negative behaviors. Need more information to determine if aggressive.

# Tongue Flicks

Used to defuse tension.

Can appear when:

- Personal space is invaded
- Dealing with unfamiliar tasks
- Apologetic and avoidant
- The unexpected occurs





# Paw Lifts



This is what we call negotiation behavior. He is negotiating space or an activity with another animal or human.

They will do this as anticipation, anxiety or excitement.

Tiny dog on the left is showing anxiety. Tongue flick, ears back, whites of the eyes showing, he is also shying away(avoidant) from the camera.

Dog on the right is showing anticipation or excitement. Ears up and forward, face is relaxed, moving forward towards the person.



# Yawns



# Caution



**Cautious dogs are not afraid.** This stance shows interest with slow investigation.

- Tail is down, not tucked.
- Whale eye can be present
- Mouth closed
- Usually braced front legs with outstretched back legs.
- Body is oriented backwards while still reaching forward.



# Caution



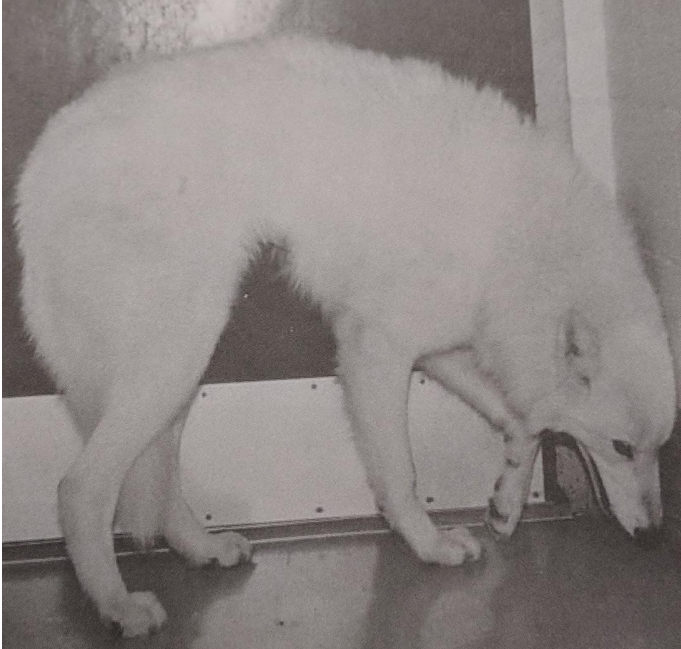
Note the dog in the background. His body is leaning away from the camera but he is still curious. Like he's stuck in a double magnet one on each side of him.

# Fear

Here are some cues a dog may give you if he is in "fear".

- Ears back or down
- Tail tucked
- Whale eye
- Paw lifts
- Tension/ wrinkles around the mouth and face.
- Watch the orientation of the animals body as well

Fear can go either of two ways. Retreat or Aggress. If a dog is showing signs of fear while you are pulling them out of their enclosure please inform MOD, Technician, or Purple DV of the behavior and leave them alone.



# Warning Language



Warning language. A lot of these are carried over from fear signs.

-Flattened ears/ pulled back  
-Hard stares. Freezing.

- Tension
- Eyes may dilate. Whale eye.
- Lips pulled back over teeth.
- Snarling or any form of vocalization



## More Warnings. Lip puckering

