

# Your Dog's Body Language

Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | October 2014

You probably know when your dog is happy since he wags his tail enthusiastically and his face is relaxed. However, do you also recognize when your dog is nervous or about to become aggressive? He will display many telltale signals as his mood changes. Understanding what they are can help you bond with your dog and second-guess behavior that he is about to display. These points aren't intended to get you to over analyze his behavior as most of us will react to pets instinctively, accurately, and with care, but for others it is good to know that your dog attempts to communicate with you at times.

## **What's in a Growl?**

Countless dog owners imagine that when their dog growls he is showing that he is angry. However, not all growls are equal. Puppies and young dogs often growl when they are playing and enjoying themselves. Dogs may also make growling noises when they are nervous and want another dog that seems threatening to back off. Furthermore, they sometimes growl as a warning that they want someone to leave them alone. Their vocals are a sign that they are unhappy, and that real aggression could follow if whomever they want to go away does not leave them alone. If they are dead set on being aggressive, dogs do not bother to provide a warning such as a growl before displaying behavior that is more hostile.

## **“What's Going On?”**

Your dog is asking what is going on when he raises his ears and tail, and cocks his head to one side. No doubt, he has heard an unfamiliar sound, or is attempting to listen hard so that he can establish what is happening around him. Your dog might also bark when he does not know where a noise originates. When he does, he is alerting you to the possibility that danger may abound. He sees you as the leader of the pack and is hoping that you check out the situation at hand since he is worried.

## **Pawing Behavior**

Puppies and older dogs often use their paws to communicate. They might tap each other on the head with their paws, or even pat you in order to get your attention and engage you in playful activity. Youngsters sometimes use their mouths for the same reason, or engage in mouthing activity since they are teething and feeling uncomfortable.

As already mentioned, you already understand wagging, or do you? Dogs occasionally wag indecisively and slowly when they are unsure about how to react to someone or another animal. Their wag seems to imply that they would like to be friendly, but the situation could alter depending on how the person or animal in front of them reacts.

Knowing what your dog's body language and vocals mean can help you establish a strong relationship with your pet. At the same time, he will appreciate the effort you are making since, just like humans, animals like to be understood.

## ***About Dogs with Wings:***

*Dogs with Wings is a leader in the international community of assistance dog training schools. The organization exists to serve people with disabilities. They work collaboratively, and in partnership with other organizations that provide assistance dogs to people with disabilities.*

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