

Dog Body Language

Knowing the basics keeps everybody safe

Green Zone



- Loose body posture
- Soft, relaxed gaze
- Neutral ear position
- Relaxed open mouth
- Neutral tail carriage
- Loose, sweeping tail wags
- Relaxed muscles



Yellow Zone



- Lip licking
- Increased tension in eyes and face
- Averted gaze
- Mouth closed, corner of mouth pulled back
- Stiff ears or ears back
- Lowered head or cowering posture
- Tucked tail, or upright, erect tail
- Raising one paw



Red Zone



- "Whale eye", wide eyes, dilated pupils
- Teeth showing (snarl)
- Growling
- Fast, panicked panting
- Full body freeze
- Tail tucked OR erect with stiff, fast wags
- Hackles raised (piloerection)
- Air snapping (warning bite)



What do you do when you see these signals?

Green Zone

These are "go ahead" signals! This dog will be happy to say hi, receive pets or treats, or be handled by you, the groomer, or the vet. These are positive signs that the dog feels comfortable and safe.

Yellow Zone

Create space between your dog and the trigger. Back away from an unfamiliar dog and pause the interaction. Reduce pressure or difficulty. This dog is trying to communicate his boundaries.

Red Zone

This is a very fearful or aggressive dog. Stop the interaction immediately and create distance from the trigger. Do not punish warning signals such as growling.

Remember... body language is communication, not misbehavior.

Dogs show us how they're feeling long before they react.