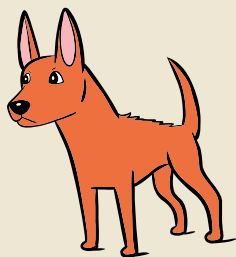


An angry or very unhappy dog

This dog is not happy and wants you to stay away or go away.

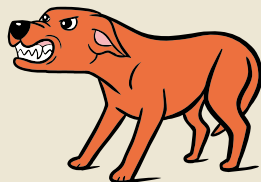
1 Dog is **standing** with a stiffened body posture, weight forward, ears are up, hair raised, eyes looking at you – pupils dark and enlarged, tail is up and stiff, wrinkled nose.



2 Dog is **laid down** covering, ears flat, teeth showing, tail down between legs.



3 Dog is standing with body down and weight towards the back, head is tilted upwards, mouth tight, lips drawn back, **teeth exposed**, eyes staring, ears back and down, snarling.



What to do if you are worried about your dog's behaviour

As well as recognising and understanding your dog's body language it is also important to be aware of any changes in their behaviour.

To spot any changes it's important to spend time watching and interacting with them and learning about how they usually behave. If your dog's behaviour changes, it could mean they are distressed, bored, ill or injured. Some other signs that your dog may be suffering include high levels of grooming, change in their feeding or toileting habits, excessive panting, or a change in energy or activity levels – for example becoming uninterested in playing when they usually can't get enough.

If you have any concerns about your dog's behaviour and how they are feeling always speak to your vet first and, if necessary, they can refer you to a clinical animal behaviourist. For further information about finding a vet and/or clinical animal behaviourist visit the RSPCA website at:

www.rspca.org.uk/findabehaviourist

www.rspca.org.uk/findavet

Photos: Andrew Forsyth/RSPCA Photolibrary; Gavin D, zeljkosantrac/iStock.com
Illustrations: Lili Chin. With thanks to Julie Bedford, certified clinical animal behaviourist.



Understanding your dog's behaviour



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS
www.rspca.org.uk [facebook.com/RSPCA](https://www.facebook.com/RSPCA) twitter.com/RSPCA_official
The RSPCA helps animals in England and Wales. Registered charity no: 219099
The RSPCA only exists with the support of public donations. © RSPCA 2015 P21 6.15

» www.rspca.org.uk



RECOGNISE AND UNDERSTAND YOUR DOG'S BODY LANGUAGE

How is your dog feeling?

Just like you, your dog can experience a range of emotions including happiness, anxiety, fearfulness and anger. It's important to understand which emotions your dog is feeling so that you can take any action necessary to make sure they are happy and healthy.

Dogs communicate mainly through body language and they use different parts of their body – including their tails, ears and eyes – to signal how they are feeling. All dogs are individuals and they will all have differences in their behaviour. Dogs also come in many shapes and sizes so it can be difficult to read their body language and to tell how they're feeling – for example, dogs with really short tails may not be able to lower them to signal that they're feeling worried. So it's really important to spend time watching your dog, in order to learn what is normal behaviour for them.

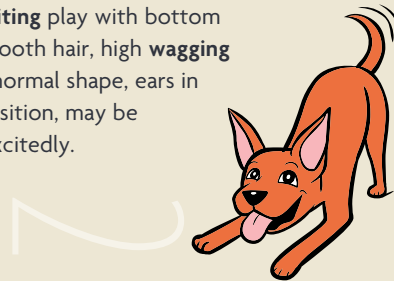
A happy dog

This dog is relaxed and happy.

- 1 Dog has a **relaxed** body posture, **smooth** hair, mouth **open** and **relaxed**, ears in natural position, wagging tail, eyes normal shape.



- 2 Dog is **inviting** play with bottom **raised**, smooth hair, high **wagging** tail, eyes normal shape, ears in natural position, may be **barking** excitedly.



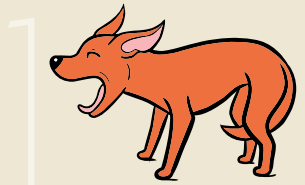
- 3 Dog's weight is distributed across all four paws, **smooth** hair, tail **wagging**, face is interested and alert, relaxed mouth and **open**.



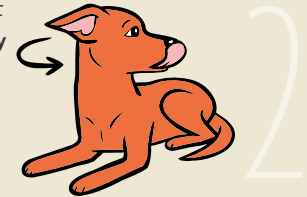
A worried dog

This dog is telling you they are uncomfortable and don't want you near them.

- 1 Dog is **standing** but body posture and head position is **low**. Tail is tucked under, ears are back and dog **yawning**.



- 2 Dog is **lying down** and avoiding eye contact or turning head away from you and **licking** and ears are back.



- 3 Dog is sitting with head **lowered**, ears are back, tail **tucked away**, not making eye contact, yawning, **raising front paw**.

