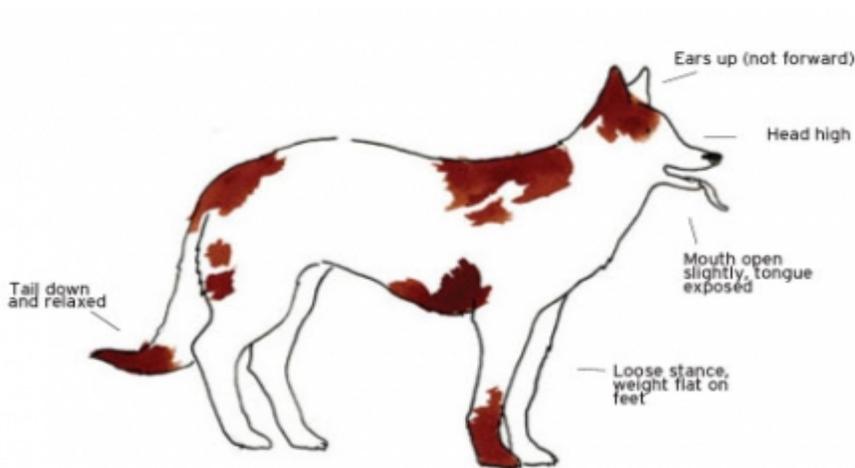


How To Read Your Dog's Body Language

By Stanley Coren | Illustrations by Emma Trithart

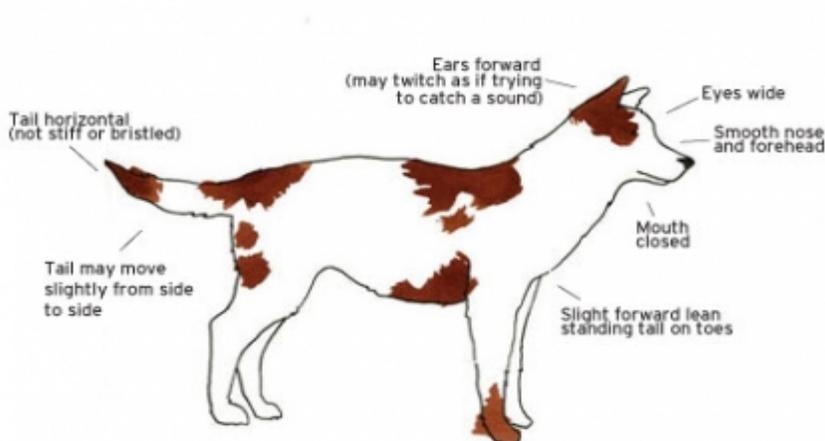
What is your dog trying to tell you? Dogs have a language that allows them to communicate their emotional state and their intentions to others around them. Although dogs do use sounds and signals, much of the information that they send is through their body language, specifically their facial expressions and body postures. Understanding what your dog is saying can give you a lot of useful information, such as when your dog is spooked and nervous about what is going on, or when your dog is edgy and might be ready to snap at someone. You do have to look at the dog's face and his whole body. To help you, I have created a sort of visual version of a Berlitz phrase book to allow you to interpret the most important messages your dog is sending to you.

Relaxed Approachable



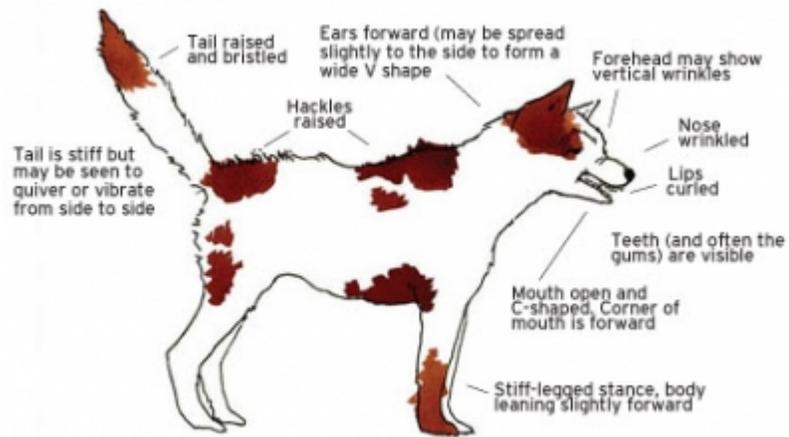
This dog is relaxed and reasonably content. Such a dog is unconcerned and unthreatened by any activities going on in his immediate environment and is usually approachable.

Alert- Checking Things Out



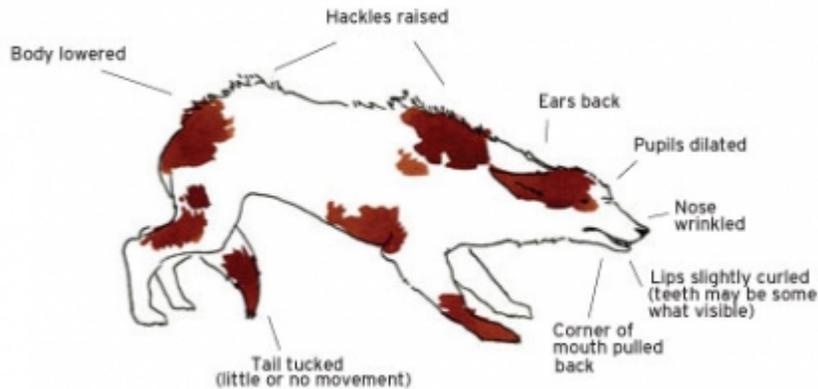
If the dog has detected something of interest, or something unknown, these signals communicate that he is now alert and paying attention while he is assessing the situation to determine if there is any threat or if any action should be taken.

Confident and Threatening



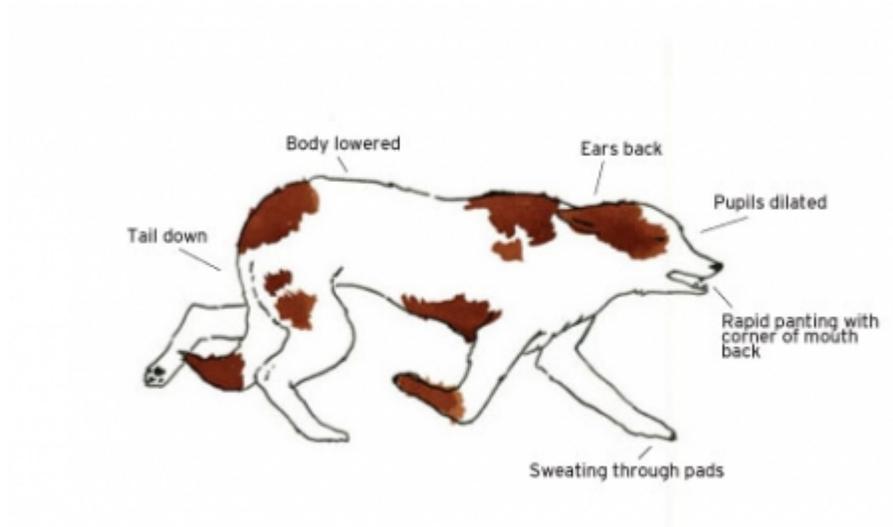
This dog is threatening that he will act aggressively if he is challenged.

Fearful and Threatening



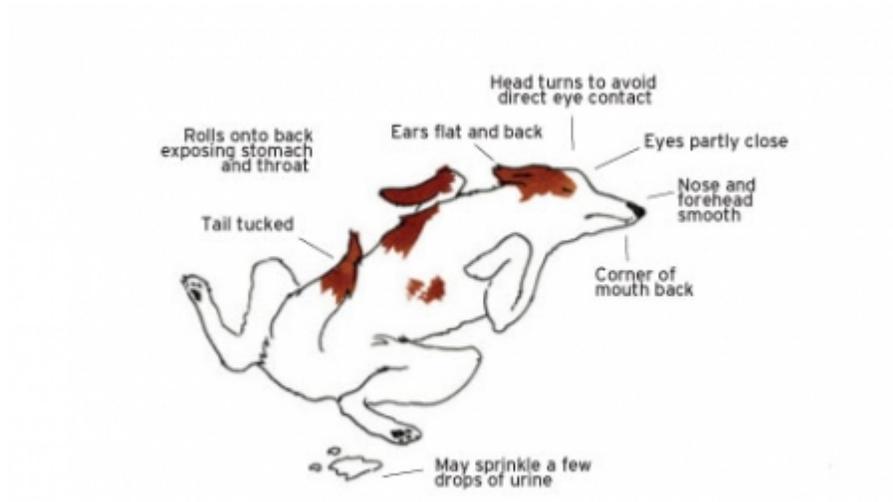
This dog is frightened but is not submissive and may attack if pressed. A dog will generally give these signals when he is directly facing the individual who is threatening him.

Stressed and Worried



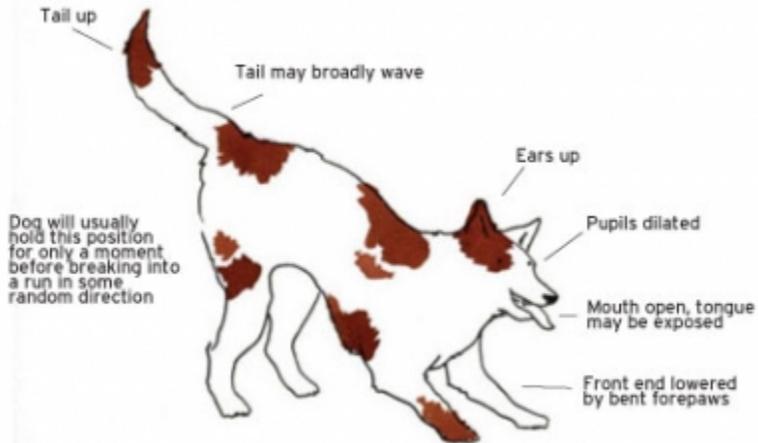
This dog is under either social or environmental stress. These signals, however, are a general “broadcast” of his state of mind and are not being specifically addressed to any other individual. This dog is somewhat fearful and is offering signs of submission. These signals are designed to pacify the individual who the dog sees as potentially threatening, in order to avoid any further challenges and prevent conflict.

Total Submission



This dog is indicating total surrender and submission. He is trying to say that he accepts his lower status by groveling before a higher ranking or threatening individual in the hopes of avoiding a physical confrontation.

Playfulness



Here we have the basic invitation to play. It may be accompanied by excited barking or playful attacks and retreats. This set of signals may be used as a sort of "punctuation mark" to indicate that any previous rough behaviour was not meant as a threat or challenge.