

Phase 1

The Core Science of Canines

Seven basic groups of canines are sporting, working, herding, terrier, non-sporting, hound and toy. Let's take a moment to review each of these and give examples as well as characteristics of each.

1. **Sporting.** Some of the more familiar dogs in this class includes English Setter, Irish Setter, Cocker Spaniel, Golden Retriever and Weimaraner. These dogs are characteristically very distracted. They make good bird dogs but may have trouble maintaining focus on commands. They tend to become distracted by other dogs as well as people. The Spaniels and Setters in this class may be overly insensitive. This may make them more difficult to correct but better suited to live with small children. Some may consider this class as hyper. Therefore, they have a high need for daily exercise to burn off excess energy. Failure to do so may result in problem behavior such as barking, digging, destructiveness and pacing or fence running.

2. **Working.** The more commonly known breed of this class are Mastiff, Rottweiler, Siberian Husky, Doberman Pinscher, Boxer, Great Pyrenees, Great Dane and Alaskan Malamute. These dogs have been bred to be dominant. Owners of these breeds require strong, fair and consistent leadership or the dog may try to dominate the owner. Working dogs may become overly territorial of their toys, owners and even favorite area of the house or yard. Their independent nature may come off as stubbornness during training. Positive reinforcement techniques work well. CAK9A often implements the **"No Free Lunch Policy"** which is simply the dog will be given nothing for free. It must obey an obedience cue before receiving anything. Sometimes these dogs may prove to be insensitive and difficult to correct. They may even become aggressive or shut down. It is important for owners to establish an appropriate rank and relationship with their dog. These dogs must respect their owner, or they will push limits.

3. **Herding.** Favorites in this class are Border Collie, Belgian Malinois, German Shepherd, Australian Shepherd, Cardigan Welsh Corgi and Collie to name a few. These dogs have a high prey/ chase drive. While a good drive is crucial for specialty training, it can be a source of distraction. Activities of small children such as bike riding and general play easily excite these dogs which makes them more likely to bark and nip. Herding dogs have a high need for mental activity. If an owner doesn't meet their need with activities through training, they could develop undesirable behaviors such as barking, tail chasing, animal chasing, pacing or fence running, digging or aggression. Activities such as fetch, and tricks satisfy their need for mental activity. They also have a high need for daily exercise as well. Failure to provide such could resort in above mentioned undesired behaviors as well. Since these dogs were bred to work closely with humans, they are easily trained. Their high pack drive and desire to please can make them become overly attached to their owners. They are prone to separation anxiety if

not taught to accept being apart from their owners at an early age. Crate training is highly recommended.

4. **Terrier.** All dogs in this class are a various breed of terrier. You may be familiar with the Welsh Terrier, Bull Terrier, Airedale Terrier, Smooth Fox Terrier, and Wire Fox Terrier. These dogs are bred to be active and tenacious which enable them to hunt vermin and not back down if attacked. This make is difficult for an inexperienced owner to handle. Aggression is a common response to correction that most dogs would back down from. A high need for daily exercise is common in Terriers. Lack of exercise could lead to destructive and/ or hyper behavior. Obedience and acceptable work such as fetch, and tricks should be sufficed. They are alert, agile and fast. It could make it difficult for owners to keep up with them. Inexperienced owners may feel left behind by these dogs both mentally and physically. Their hunting instincts may be problematic as they tend to dig in search of vermin. They can be dog/ animal aggressive because of their strong hunt instinct.

5. **Non-Sporting.** This group contains various breeds such as Bulldog, Dalmatian, Poodle, Chinese Shar-Pei, Finnish Spitz, Boston Terrier, Chow Chow and French Bulldog to name a few. Some of the dogs in this group may have characteristics of working while others have characteristics of sporting dogs. Since most of these dogs were not bred for labor-intensive purposes, they may be difficult to motivate for training. Using the **“No Free Lunch Policy”** can help increase motivation to obey obedience cues. Since these dogs were not bred to work, they make better pets. Less drive to hunt and chase make them easier for inexperienced owners to handle.

6. **Hound.** This class includes dogs of all sizes from the Rhodesian Ridgeback to the Dachshund. Popular breeds in this class include Bassett Hound, Beagle, Greyhound, Basenji, Bloodhound, Whippet, Afghan and Irish Wolfhound and several others. Scent and sometimes movement can easily distract these dogs. Again, the **“No Free Lunch Policy”** works well to motivate these dogs to maintain focus. Being allowed to sniff around may be used as a reward for obedience. Hounds have an independent nature and are bred to work independently of humans. Because of this they may have less pack drive or desire to please their owners. This sometimes comes off as stubbornness or stupidity. Owners should be prepared to decrease the number of repetitions they use when practicing obedience, as these dogs will bore quickly. Rewards should be considered valuable by the dog and should be the highlight of their day.

7. **Toy.** Small but mighty, the toy class includes the Shih Tzu, Pug, Poodle, Maltese, Chihuahua, Pekingese, Chinese Crested, Miniature Pinscher and Pomeranian to list a few most common. Sometimes a small dog’s misbehavior is dismissed due to its size. For example, it is much easier to ignore a Maltese barking at strangers on a sidewalk than it would be a Rottweiler exhibiting the same behavior. Some owners view their small dog as a surrogate child or “toy” and not as the true dogs they are. Because of pampering, owners find difficulty in obedience training. This skewed relationship often creates behavioral problems that would never be tolerated in a larger dog. The small stature of the toy dog makes training more difficult as owner’s find it

difficult to bend over repetitively to reward the dog. Putting the dog on a table for training eliminates this problem. Many breeds in the toy class do not realize they are small and act as though they are larger. It is common to see a toy confront a much bigger dog to play or fight with. Something owners should be aware of is the delicate physiology of the toy dog. It is possible for a toy breed to break a leg just by jumping off a sofa or bed. Caution should be used to not overdo any physical methods of training or correction.

It is wise to become familiar with common characteristics for these breeds. While we have included a very general description of each breed group's characteristics, we would suggest that you do some more specific research on your own before committing to owning a dog. A few additional important factors to consider before acquiring a dog are listed below:

- Do you have children that will be around the dog?
- Do you have expendable income available to provide for the dog whether it be food, bedding, medical maintenance or emergency medical attention?
- How much time do you have available to dedicate to the dog?
- Do you or any member of your family have allergies?
- Do you have other pets that could be problematic with a dog? EX: cat, hamster, cattle, chickens
- What are your living arrangements? Are pets allowed? If so, is there a pet deposit?
- What do you want the dog for? Pet? Protection? Working?
- Can I afford training? Can I not afford training?

Selecting the appropriate breed for your needs results in a better experience for you as a dog owner as well as the dog.

Critical periods in puppy development

Neonatal Period (0-12 Days):

The puppy responds only to warmth, touch, and smell. He cannot regulate body functions such as temperature and elimination.

Transition Period (13 - 20 Days):

Eyes and ears are open, but sight and hearing are limited. Tail wagging begins and the puppy begins to control body functions.

Awareness Period (21 - 28 Days):

Sight and hearing functions well. The puppy is learning that he is a dog and has a great deal of need for a stable environment.

Canine Socialization Period (21 - 49 Days):

Interacting with his mother and littermates, the pup learns various canine behaviors. He is now aware of the differences between canine and human societies.

Human Socialization Period (7 to 12 Weeks):

The pup has the brain wave of an adult dog. The best time for going to a new home. He now has the ability to learn respect, simple behavioral responses: sit, stay, come. Housebreaking begins. He now learns by association. The permanent man/dog bonding begins, and he is able to accept gentle discipline and establish confidence.

Fear Impact Period (8 - 11 Weeks):

Try to avoid frightening the puppy during this time, since traumatic experiences can have an effect during this period. As you can see, this period overlaps that of the previous definition and children or animal should not be allowed to hurt or scare the puppy -- either maliciously or inadvertently. It is very important now to introduce other humans, but he must be closely supervised to minimize adverse conditioning. Learning at this age is permanent.

This is the stage where you wonder if your dog is going to be a woosy butt all his life. Also introducing your puppy to other dogs at this time will help him become more socialized. If available in your area, a doggy day care is great for this.

Seniority Classification Period (13 - 16 Weeks):

This critical period is also known as the "Age of Cutting" - cutting teeth and cutting apron strings. At this age, the puppy begins testing dominance and leadership. Biting behavior is absolutely discouraged from thirteen weeks on. Praise for the correct behavior response is the most effective tool. Meaningful praise is highly important to shape positive attitude.

Flight Instinct Period (4 to 8 Months):

During this period puppies test their wings- they will turn a deaf ear when called. This period lasts from a few days to several weeks. It is critical to praise the positive and minimize the negative behavior during this time. However, you must learn how to achieve the correct response. This period corresponds to teething periods, and behavioral problems become compounded by physiological development chewing.

Second Fear impact period (6 - 14 Months):

Also called, "The fear of situations period", usually corresponds to growth spurts. This critical age may depend on the size of the dog. Small dogs tend to experience these periods earlier than large dogs. Great care must be taken not to reinforce negative behavior. Force can frighten the dog, and soothing tones serve to encourage his fear. His fear should be handled with patience and kindness, and training during this period puts the dog in a position of success, while allowing him to work things out while building self-confidence.

Maturity (1 - 4 years):

Many breeds' especially giant breeds continue to grow and physically change well beyond four years of age. The average dog develops to full maturity between 1-1 1/2 years and three years of age. This period is often marked by an increase in aggression and by a renewed testing for leadership. During this time, while testing for leadership, the dog should be handled firmly. Regulars training throughout this testing period, praise him for the proper response. Giving him no inroads to affirm his leadership will remind him that this issue has already been settled.

Proper Dog Socialization

SOCIALIZING YOUR PUPPY

The greatest window of learning in a dog's life starts around 3 weeks of age and closes between 16 and 20 weeks. This period allows puppies to be exposed to a wide variety of sights, sounds, smells, and sensations without becoming fearful. Puppies who miss out on these experiences may never learn to be comfortable around unfamiliar things, paving the way for anxiety, fear, and aggression later on in life. Follow these steps to give your puppy the best start possible:

Handling

Young puppies should be cuddled and handled daily by as many different people as possible. Keep the contact gentle and pleasant for the puppy. Hold the puppy in different positions, gently finger her feet, rub her muzzle, stroke her back and sides, look in her ears.

Sounds

Acclimate your puppy to lots of different sounds, being careful not to overwhelm him with too much noise too fast. Expose him to kitchen sounds, telephones ringing, children playing, sportscasters yelling on TV, radios playing, buses moving by, and so on.

Food bowl exercises

Teach your puppy to enjoy having people approach her bowl while she's eating. This will help to prevent resource guarding, which occurs when dogs feel anxious about others approaching their own valued resources. Walk up to your puppy while she's eating her food, drop an even tastier treat into her dish, and walk away. Repeat once or twice during each meal until your puppy is visibly excited about your approach. Then walk up, physically pick up her dish, put in a treat, give the dish back, and walk away.

Teach your puppy to be alone

Puppies should learn to tolerate being completely separate from other people and animals every day to avoid developing separation anxiety.

Prevent aggression

There's no need to show the dog who's boss or try to dominate him. Confrontational approaches like pinning your dog down or scruffing him frequently backfire and create the aggression dog owners seek to avoid. Focus on rewarding correct behavior and preventing undesirable behavior to teach your puppy human rules and build a trusting relationship.

Introduce your puppy to new people

Introduce your puppy to several new people every day, keeping the interactions pleasant and unthreatening. Focus especially on setting up pleasant encounters with unfamiliar men and well-behaved children.

Prevent biting

Provide appropriate toys to redirect your puppy's biting. When your puppy bites too hard during play, making a sudden noise ("Ow!") and end the game to help him learn to use his mouth gently. Never squeeze your puppy's mouth shut, yell at him, or hold him down. This will frighten him and likely make biting worse. Note that while puppies under five months tend to explore the

world with their mouths, dogs past this age are considered adolescents and should no longer be play biting.

SOCIALIZING YOUR ADOLESCENT DOG

Though a dog's sensitive period of socialization typically ends around 4-5 months old, we recommend continuing to socialize your dog for at least the first year of their life.

Keep introducing your dog to new people

Dogs only remain social when continually exposed to unfamiliar people. Continued pleasant exposure to new people keeps the idea that strangers are good news in the forefront of your dog's mind.

Keep introducing your dog to other dogs

There are lots of ways to do this: dog parks, play groups, play dates with friends' dogs, and simple leash walks can all help accomplish this. Without this experience, dogs can lose their ability to know how to behave appropriately around other dogs.

Vary your walks

Try to avoid taking the same walking route every day. Let your dog experience a variety of environments, from sidewalks to dirt roads. This will provide your growing dog with much-needed mental stimulation.

Teach your dog to be alone

Scheduling daily alone time with neither people nor other pets nearby is critical to preventing separation anxiety. Use a baby gate or crates to prevent your dog from shadowing you constantly when you're home. Ask a friend to pet sit for an hour regularly.

Don't punish fear

Most displays of aggression are the result of fear. Many owners are caught off guard when their normally easygoing pup reacts fearfully to a new dog or person. However, this change often coincides with the end of the sensitive period of socialization. Starting around 5 months old, your dog may start to interpret anything unfamiliar as a threat and will typically either flee or confront what frightens him. Punishing this reaction will only confirm his fear, so instead remove your dog from the situation and ask for a different behavior (like "sit").

Continue handling your dog

Make sure your dog is comfortable with different parts of his body being handled. This will ensure that if he must be handled in an emergency he will be less likely to bite. Be on the watch

for a stiff body, whites of the eyes showing, a closed mouth, and escape attempts. If you see these signs, stop handling your dog.

SOCIALIZING YOUR ADULT DOG

“I need to socialize my three-year-old dog. How do I do that?” We hear this question frequently because owners want to give their dogs the fullest life possible, which many assume includes play with other dogs. In reality, adult dogs can lead perfectly happy lives without visits to the dog park or off-leash play.

Play in puppies vs. adult dogs

Off-leash play is beneficial to puppies learning behavior cues, but the same practice can have detrimental effects on adult dogs. While there are exceptions, when dogs reach social maturity between ages one and three, they often no longer enjoy playing with large groups of unfamiliar dogs. They may either attempt to avoid the dogs, stand close to their human family, or even growl and snap at boisterous young dogs that come too close to them. This behavior is often misidentified as abnormal, **when in fact it is quite common.**

Setting up playtime for your adult dog

If your heart is set on social time with other dogs, start by introducing your dog to one dog at a time. Invite a friend to bring her gentle, easygoing dog on a walk with you and your dog. Allow a polite distance between dogs while they get accustomed to each other. If both dogs appear relaxed throughout the walk, allow them to sniff each other briefly. Keep leashes loose and each interaction short. If either dog appears to be tensing up, call the dogs apart with pleasant, relaxed voices. If both dogs' bodies appear loose and tails are wagging, consider an off-leash session in one of your fenced yards with leashes dragging, using the same short sessions and reinforcement for relaxed behavior.

Types of aggression

Aggression in dogs is cause for concern in many dog owners. Aggression is defined as the threat of harm to another individual involving snarling, growling, snapping, biting, barking or lunging. Understanding the contributing factors in aggression can often help in the treatment of aggression.

Your dog's way of relating to other dogs will change as he goes through adolescence and even adulthood. How much it changes will depend on his early socialization, his genetic makeup, and the training and supervision he receives.

Other types of aggression

- **Social aggression:** In multi-dog households, there isn't usually a dominant dog or submissive dog. Instead, dogs' roles change depending on the context involved. For example, a dog that claims access to a favorite toy may let the other dog claim the couch. But if more than one dog wants to be the leader in a situation, fights can break out. Reward polite behavior and manage the environment to prevent conflicts from developing.
- **Pain-induced aggression:** Animals attempt to protect themselves by responding aggressively when they feel pain in attempt to prevent future pain. Unfortunately, animals often attack the person or animal nearest to them rather than only the thing actually causing pain. Handle a dog in pain very cautiously. Many owners get bit while attempting to help their injured dog. Using training devices that inflict pain on animals, such as prong collars, choke chains, and e-collars, are not recommended because they can lead the animal to become more aggressive to stop the pain.
- **Resource guarding:** Dogs often attempt to protect resources they control. A dog may guard valuable resources such as food, toys, and a bed, but they may also guard less valuable resources such as bits of trash. In guarding these resources, they can use techniques such as growling, snapping, and even biting to maintain the control over the resource.
- **Frustration aggression:** When a dog is prevented from doing something they want or forced to do something they don't want to, they can become frustrated and direct aggression towards the nearest animal or person. In dogs, examples of frustration aggression include aggression resulting from being physically held back by their collar or forced into a kennel.
- **Learned aggression:** Once a dog acts aggressively for any of the above reasons, but especially for fear-motivated aggression, they may learn the best way to get what they want is to repeat the aggression. If barking and lunging at the mailman gets him to leave, then the dog will learn barking and lunging is effective. Similarly, if biting a hand reaching for them gets the hand to go away, they will quickly learn to bite to remove unwanted contact.
- **Redirected aggression:** Another form of frustration aggression in which a dog becomes aroused by a stimulus (such as a doorbell or dog outside the window) and is prevented from directing aggression at the stimulus and instead turns and attacks another dog or their owner.
- **Fear-motivated aggression:** Dogs fearing for their own safety are more likely than confident dogs to bite another human or dog. The perceived threat to the dog can be real or imagined. Remember the threat is from the dog's perspective. For example, a person could be very innocently trying to reach over the dog to take a hold of their collar, but the dog may perceive the motion as intent to do harm, which leads the dog to react aggressively.
- **Genetic predisposition:** Some dogs are genetically predisposed to aggression. Dogs of any breed can be selectively bred for aggression intentionally or unintentionally.
- **Protective aggression:** Most often happens when a mother protects her young puppies.
- **Territorial aggression:** Dogs may attempt to guard or defend their home or space. Territorial aggression includes barking and lunging at fences or from windows.
- **Predatory aggression:** Motivated by an animal's drive to hunt and consume food. Often, predatory behavior is seen in dogs chasing smaller dogs, cats or even young children.

Basic Health Routines & Disease Prevention

In addition to feeding and exercising your dog, other aspects of general care are needed to keep your dog healthy throughout its life. These include routine veterinary care for vaccinations, parasite control, and dental care; grooming; and protection from household hazards.

Importance of Veterinary Care

Adult dogs should have a complete veterinary examination at least once a year. Puppies need veterinary visits usually every 3 to 4 weeks until they are about 4 months old. Geriatric dogs (older than 7 to 8 years old) should see their veterinarian twice a year or more frequently because illness is more common in older pets and it can be identified sooner. Your veterinarian may recommend a wellness program for your pet, including routine blood work to monitor for problems such as early kidney or liver disease.

Signs of Illness

Because you are more familiar with your dog than anyone else, you should watch it carefully for subtle signs of illness that another person or even a veterinarian may miss. General signs of illness include a lack of appetite or decreased activity. Other more specific signs include vomiting and diarrhea, urinating more (or less) frequently, coughing and sneezing, or a discharge from the eyes, ears, or nose. Illness can also show up as a loss of hair or itchy areas on the skin or around the ears. Problems with the musculoskeletal system are often seen as stiffness or lameness, such as not putting weight on a leg. If your dog shows any of these signs for more than a day or two, a visit with your veterinarian is a good idea.

Giving Medication

Pills and chewable medications are usually relatively easy to administer to dogs. Most dogs will readily eat a pill that is hidden in a small treat, such as a piece of cheese or a bit of peanut butter. Sometimes, gently holding the dog's muzzle closed until you are sure that it has swallowed can be helpful. Liquid medications are sometimes prescribed, particularly for puppies. Liquids can be given via a syringe into the rear of the dog's mouth by inserting the tip of the syringe near the back teeth on either side. Holding the dog's head pointing partially upward can help prevent spills. Spot-on products or other topical medications are administered directly on the coat or skin. If your dog needs eye drops or ear medication, your veterinarian or veterinary technician will give you a demonstration. Regardless of the type of medication or how it is to be given, it is important to read and follow all label instructions.



**Liquid medicine is
easiest given by
eyedropper or syringe.**

Vaccinations

Vaccination is a key component of preventive medicine in dogs, just as in people. Vaccinations are given to stimulate the immune system against infection before exposure to a disease. Several vaccines are routinely given to dogs as the core defense against serious infectious illness (for example, distemper, parvovirus, rabies). Several others (referred to as noncore) are important in certain regions and situations (for example, *Bordetella*, Lyme disease). Your veterinarian can advise which vaccines are necessary in your local area and circumstances.

Traditionally, booster vaccinations have been given every year throughout the dog's life to ensure ongoing protection. However, the need for yearly revaccination has been questioned in recent years. Some data indicate that after the first year of life, immunity lasts long enough so that booster vaccinations are needed only every few years. However, the debate is ongoing. Your veterinarian will be aware of the most recent findings and can advise you about the best vaccination program for your pet.

Parasite Control

The primary intestinal parasites of dogs include roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms. These worms damage the digestive tract or interfere with absorption of essential nutrients, or both. Intestinal parasite infections are diagnosed by finding worm eggs (or sometimes actual worms or worm segments) in fecal samples. Fecal samples should be tested periodically (yearly or on the schedule recommended by your veterinarian) in all dogs and more frequently in puppies, which are especially prone to parasite infection. These worms usually do not cause intestinal infection in people; however, hookworm infections leading to abdominal pain and inflammation have developed in people with weakened immune systems. Roundworm larvae also have the potential to infect people. When infective roundworm eggs are ingested, they can develop into larvae in the intestine and potentially migrate into sensitive organs. This migration is much more likely to occur in children and people with weakened immune systems.

Sanitation is key to prevention because roundworm eggs take about 30 days to become infective; thus, promptly cleaning up feces from your yard can essentially eliminate potential exposure.

Heartworm is an especially serious parasite that is transmitted by mosquito bites. These worms live in the major blood vessels of the lung, causing inflammation of the blood vessels and potentially resulting in heart damage and early death. Because treatment of heartworm infection carries a number of serious health risks and is also potentially fatal, prevention is critical. The Companion Animal Parasite Council, an assembly of experts in veterinary medicine and parasitology, recommend year-round heartworm prevention for dogs, because it is impossible to accurately predict all times when mosquitoes will be present. Additionally, most heartworm preventives contain medications that also treat for intestinal parasites, which can be transmitted at all times of the year. Blood tests to check for heartworm disease should be done yearly.

Common external parasites include fleas, ticks, and mange mites. Monthly preventive treatments are available to control fleas and ticks, and are administered as body sprays or “spot-on” preparations that are placed on the skin between the shoulder blades. Mange mites can be detected by scraping the skin of infected areas for signs of mites or their eggs. Signs of mange include red, scaly areas or bald patches on the skin, or both.

Dental Care

Dogs need dental attention throughout their lives. You can help keep your dog’s teeth and gums in good condition by feeding dry food, providing certain toys (for example, “flossie”-style bones), brushing your dog’s teeth regularly, and following a program of professional dental cleanings and oral care performed by your veterinarian. Good dental care reduces the development of plaque which, if untreated, can progress to gingivitis and periodontal disease. In severe cases of dental disease, extraction is common.

Grooming

Your dog’s hair coat should be brushed regularly to remove shed hair and prevent hair mats. Grooming is especially important for dogs with thick or shaggy hair coats that mat or tangle easily. Mats can irritate the skin, and the moist, stuffy conditions underneath them leaves the skin more susceptible to bacterial or parasite infections. Mats should be removed with electric clippers (not scissors) to avoid cutting the skin underneath. Periodic bathing with a pet shampoo is also important for maintaining healthy skin and fur. However, excessive bathing can irritate and dry the skin and hair. On average, most dogs do not need to be bathed more than once a month, depending on time of year and weather conditions.



Dogs with long or shaggy hair require grooming to keep their hair from becoming matted.

Household Hazards

Your dog must be protected from household hazards, including chemicals, pesticides, cleaning supplies, antifreeze, electrical cords, drugs, alcohol, and poisonous plants. Curious puppies that tend to investigate and chew everything are at greatest risk; however, these products must be kept out of reach of *all* dogs. Dangerous items (especially electrical cords) can be frequently coated with a foul-tasting spray to discourage chewing. Elements of house design, such as steep stairs, slippery floors, and open windows also pose potential hazards for pets (and people) and should be corrected as much as possible.

Spaying/Neutering

All dogs should be spayed or neutered unless they are to be used for breeding. This prevents unwanted puppies and avoids potentially serious future medical problems, such as prostate disease in males, and uterine infection or mammary cancer in females. Spaying and neutering can also improve behavior. Females are usually spayed around 6 months of age, before their first heat cycle. Allowing a female to go through a heat or to have a litter is *not* necessary. In fact, the surgery is safest and the future medical benefits are greatest when it is done before the first heat, or estrus, has started. Males are usually neutered between 5 and 10 months of age, depending on breed and size.

Canine Communication & Body Language

Humans primarily use verbal communication, dogs mainly communicate non-verbally through the use of body language and secondarily through vocalizations. This body language includes tail carriage and motion, ear and eye position, body position and movement, and facial expressions. Knowledge of body language, and the ability to accurately identify it, will help decipher what a dog is trying to communicate.

When observing a dog's body language to determine what is being communicated, it is crucial to observe the *entire* dog, as well as the *situation/context*, in order to accurately determine what is being conveyed. For example, a wagging tail does not necessarily mean a friendly dog. A moving tail, as a part of the dog's body language that is readily identifiable, is often noticed first.

However, if the dog's body is stiff, the ears are back and the dog is in a crouching position, these other features of body language are telling you that this is not a happy dog.

There are five common groups of canine communication signals. As you review the groups, please keep in mind that in a given situation a dog can demonstrate *more than one* of these groupings in response to the situation. For example, a dog may begin by displaying excitement signals in response to a stimulus, decide that stimulus is a threat, and switch to aggressive signals, fear signals, or even both. Also keep in mind that stress can drastically influence a dog's response to a given situation. Again, we must look at the *whole dog* and his *body language*, as well as the *situation/environment* in order to get the "big" picture of what the dog is communicating, what may happen next, and what our appropriate responses should be.

Fearful Communication

When a dog is frightened, he most likely will react to the fearful stimulus with his whole body. The body language may show up as a combination of several signals and/or may appear as a progression through these signals as the dog's response intensifies. He may lick his lips (though he is not hungry) or yawn (though he is not tired). He may keep his mouth tightly closed. He may cower or lower his body, lower or tuck his tail, or put his ears back. He may also tremble or shake, look away to avoid eye contact, or lean back to avoid the stimulus that is perceived as frightening. Sometimes, the absence of active signals can communicate as much as the active signals. For example, a dog that is not eating food/treats, is avoiding people when they approach his kennel, or freezes when reached toward, appearing "shut down" is demonstrating fearful communication signals. Note: There is a potential for a fearful dog to switch to aggressive body language if the presence of the fearful stimulus continues, or becomes more threatening.



Arousal Communication

Often in shelters we observe dogs that demonstrate high arousal or excitement behaviors. The arousal or excitement can be due to many factors including age (adolescent dogs), confinement, lack of physical and mental outlets, and personality. Arousal/excitement is often a response to a stimulus the dog likes: such as a person, dog, or toy. For example, a dog with soft, relaxed body, eyes, mouth and a wagging tail that jumps up for your attention is a dog that is seeing a *favorable* stimulus (person). He may also play-bow: rear end in the air, front end lower if he is excited about a favorable stimulus (person or toy). However, arousal behaviors can also be due to *unfavorable* stimulus: such as an unwanted person, dog, or situation. Arousal signals in response to an unfavorable stimulus may be coupled with *fear signals*, such as trembling or a low/tucked tail. Arousal signals may also be paired with *aggressive signals* such as barking or lunging, or with *anxious signals* such as pacing or spinning.

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Some common behaviors observed in aroused/excited dogs are jumping, mounting, and mouthing. Mouthing can be soft (teeth contact but no pressure or pain) or hard (teeth contact causing pain and discomfort) or biting of leash or clothing. When a dog is aroused or excited, its fur can be pilo-erect (standing up), its ears are generally forward or at attention, and its body stance is upward and erect. The tail is often up and wagging stiffly, and the eyes are open wide and very focused. The dog may also be barking and/or lunging.



Anxious Communication

The shelter environment can impact the level of stress a dog experiences. Dogs that are normally pretty relaxed can become anxious and dogs with minimal anxiety on intake can become progressively anxious. Body language of an anxious dog includes excessive panting, pacing, and lack of focus. An anxious dog may demonstrate similar body language to a fearful dog. He may pant excessively (when not hot or recently exercised), lick his lips (when not hungry), yawn (when not tired), and have a slightly lowered body stance with his ears slightly back. He may wag his tail slowly and look away or move away from people. He may also shed and drool heavily. Anxious dogs, similar to fearful dogs, may exhibit the absence of behaviors and appear “shut down”. Alternatively, an anxious dog can possibly demonstrate arousal/excitement behaviors while in the shelter as a result of stress and anxiety. An anxious dog in a kennel could be barking, pacing, circling, or bounding off kennel walls.

An anxious dog may also bark and lunge at dogs passing by its kennel. A dog that is jumping at the front of the kennel as a person approaches is displaying arousal/excitement communication signals. Whereas, a dog that is jumping off the side walls of the kennel with no person approaching is displaying anxious communication signals.



Aggressive Communication

Phase 1: The Core Science of Canines

Aggression is a normal and natural behavior in dogs, and animals in general. Often aggression is triggered by a perceived threat: such as a person, another dog, or inanimate object. Aggression is used by the dog to protect itself and its “possessions” from the aforementioned perceived threat. The dog uses aggressive communication signals to convey that it will defend itself, its territory, or its possessions.

In many cases, aggressive body postures or vocalizations are warning signals and the dog’s behavior may never escalate into a bite. For example, if a dog is uncomfortable with a person approaching a rawhide he is chewing, he may stiffen, growl or show his teeth. At this point, if the person decides to continue and come closer, the dog could snap or bite, but he may not. In these cases, heeding the warning signals of the dog is the best way to prevent an escalation of aggressive behavior. As previously mentioned, aggressive signals may be paired with other signals, such as fearful ones. For example, if a dog is fearful of something and its fear signals have been misread or ignored, it may switch to aggressive signals as an escalated attempt at communication. Aggressive body language includes stiffening or freezing of the body, eyes wide with a lot of white showing (whale eye), tense mouth or curled lips, wrinkled nose, showing teeth, barking, growling, and air snapping.



Relaxed Communication

We all love to see dogs in a relaxed position. A relaxed dog appears not to have a care in the world. His mouth is relaxed and slightly open with ends that could be turning up (almost appears to be smiling). His head and ears are in a neutral position. His body is loose and eyes are soft. His tail may be wagging in a swishing back and forth, or even circular motion. He often will be lying down, sometimes even in the “frog-leg” position (now that’s a relaxed dog!).



Body Language Resources

Learning to read body language, in order to respond appropriately, takes time, observation, and practice. Remember that a dog may display more than one group of signals in the same situation. By reading the whole dog, the whole situation, and the whole context we get a better grasp of what the dog is communicating, what may happen next, and what our response should be.