

Reading Your Dog's Body Language

Family Matters

Imagine if your dog could speak.

They could tell you when they're happy, worried, excited or uncomfortable.

The truth is—they already do.

Dogs communicate with us every day. Not through words, but through their body language. The better we understand those signals, the better we can respond to their needs, prevent misunderstandings and strengthen our relationship with them.

At Amity, we believe one of the greatest skills a dog guardian can develop is learning to "listen" without words. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you become your dog's greatest advocate.

Your Dog Is Always Communicating

Every movement tells a story.

Their tail.

Their ears.

Their eyes.

Their posture.

Even the way they carry their weight.

Rather than looking at one body part in isolation, try to look at the whole picture.

A Wagging Tail Doesn't Always Mean Happiness

This is one of the biggest misconceptions.

Dogs wag their tails for many different reasons.

A relaxed, loose wag often indicates a happy, friendly dog.

A high, stiff wag may signal excitement or tension.

A low or tucked tail can suggest fear or uncertainty.

It's the whole body—not just the tail—that tells the real story.

Relaxed Dogs Learn Best

A relaxed dog typically has:

- Soft eyes.
- A loose body.
- Natural ear position.
- A gently wagging tail.
- Calm, curious behaviour.

These are the moments when dogs are most receptive to learning, playing and meeting new people.

Recognising Stress Early

Dogs often give subtle warnings long before they growl or snap.

Signs of stress may include:

- Yawning when they're not tired.
- Lip licking.
- Turning their head away.
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Panting when they're not hot.
- Lifting a front paw.
- Shaking off as if wet.
- A stiff posture.

These behaviours are your dog's way of saying,

"I'm not comfortable."

Recognising these early signals allows you to remove them from the situation before their anxiety escalates.

Growling Is Communication

Many people become alarmed when a dog growls.

In reality, a growl is often a valuable warning.

It's your dog's way of saying they feel frightened, threatened or uncomfortable.

Punishing a growl doesn't remove the underlying emotion—it simply teaches the dog not to warn before reacting.

Instead, try to understand **why** your dog felt the need to communicate that way.

Behaviour Can Reflect Health

Body language isn't only about emotions.

A dog in pain may become quieter, avoid being touched, hesitate before jumping, walk differently or appear less enthusiastic on walks.

Sudden changes in behaviour should never be dismissed as "just getting older."

Sometimes your dog's body language is the earliest sign that something medical needs attention.

Learn Their Language

The more time you spend observing your dog, the easier it becomes to recognise what's normal for them.

At Amity, **Amity Essential Membership includes unlimited health checks**, so if your dog's behaviour changes or you're unsure what they're trying to tell you, we're here to help.

Understanding your dog's body language doesn't just prevent problems.

It builds trust.

It deepens your relationship.

And it helps your dog feel truly understood.

Because they're not just your dog.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.