



Mother Knows Best Obedience School

- Information Sheet -
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LEARNING TO SPEAK DOG

1. PLAY BOW:

When either stretching after a nap or expressing friendly sociability, the dog will assume an elongated position, forelegs on the ground, rump in the air. This stretch position is one of the chief ways your dog invites play. Almost all dogs use and can read this posture, even if it is done awkwardly by a human being.

2. PAWING:

Pawing is a submissive, friendly gesture, also used as an invitation to communicate or play. Paw back – and while you're there, tell him SHAKE and you've got an instant trick.

3. PANTING:

Your dog pants both to cool his body (because he does not sweat through his skin as people do, but rather via his tongue and the pads of his feet) and to express his friendliness. If you pant back to him, he will either respond in kind or he will translate. That is, he'll either pant back, or he'll play bow, paw at you, wag his tail. Dog talk, like English, has synonyms.

4. MOBBING:

Mobbing and subsequent mouth licking are most often seen in puppies when their mother approaches. Your puppy may mob you when you come home, and for similar reasons. In the wild, and sometimes even in the tame, when mother is mobbed and her lips are licked, she regurgitates her half-digested meal for her babes. You, on the other hand, can merely pet Buddy when he mobs you. There's no need to get carried away with this.

5. SUBMISSIVE POSTURING:

Submissive posturing begins with the ears back, tail tucked, hind leg up, a roll over onto the back, neck and tummy are exposed, tip of tail is wagged, dog urinates. This is language you should understand since you will be training and correcting your dog. This is not language you should "speak" as it is not appropriate for someone of your species or station.

6. TAIL WAGGING:

Tail wagging is an indication of friendliness. If wagged low, it is an indication of submission. When only the tip of the tail wags, your dog is not sure if you will be happy about what he is doing – but he hopes so.

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7. TAIL TUCKING:

Submission and fear are expressed with a tucked tail. The female will also tuck her tail to protect herself from amorous males when she is not in season. When ready to mate, she flags her tail, tossing it high and to the side.

8. HACKLES RAISED:

The expression, “Don’t get your back up”, should let you know that raised hackles mean anger. If you see a dog with everything going out and forward – hackles raised, ears forward, tail high, up on his toes – that’s an angry dog. Fear is expressed by pulling in – ears back, tail tucked, rounded back (tummy tucked). Mixed messages – ears back, hackles up – could mean a shy, sharp dog or fear biter. This dog, the one expressing ambivalence, is less predictable and can be more dangerous than the aggressive dog.

9. THE “T” POSITION:

The more dominant of two dogs will form a “T” by leaning on the submissive dog’s back with his muzzle or even his paws.

10. MOUNTING:

Mounting is used for mating and also as a display of dominance. A dog wishing to vote himself alpha will mount another dog of either sex as an act of self-assertion. There is no appropriate reason for a dog to be allowed to mount a person.

11. SUBMISSIVE GRIN:

This is a caught-in-the-act grin acknowledging submission.

12. LAUGH FACE:

An open-mouthed happy look invites play or shows that the dog knows he just cracked a particularly worthwhile joke.

13. MEANINGFUL SOUNDS:

As you add the posture to the sound, you will be able to interpret the variety of utterances your dog makes. His voice can express a range of feelings sadness – sadness, boredom, joy, anger, friendliness, pain, a call to gather, a kind of “ahem” to get your attention, loneliness, exuberance.