

# CALMING SIGNALS

Dogs give off what is called calming signals to keep the peace. This information given by a dog is so valuable in understanding what is causing stress in your dog's life.

We unknowingly do things that stress our dogs, and they repeatedly try to tell us they are not comfortable in a particular situation.

Be aware of your dog's signals to avoid any problems like bites or other types of aggression.

## Examples of Calming Signals:

- Turning his head to the side
- Diverting his eyes to either side (shifty eyes)
- Turning his back to you or turning to his side
- Licking his nose
- Freezing in position
- Walking slowly using slow movements
- Moving toward you in a curve
- Yawning
- Sitting or lying down
- Sniffing with nose to the ground
- Splitting up (physically going between dogs or people)
- Wagging his tail in different ways
- Making himself small
- Lifting his paws up and down
- Licking faces

## Growling

A dog's growl means that something is wrong: he is uncomfortable, scared, feeling threatened, or feeling that something he has is threatened. **NEVER punish a growl**, as it is an important form of communication from your dog and serves as a warning that something is wrong. If you suppress the growl, you may succeed in suppressing the warning so that the dog has no other recourse but to escalate to a snap or even a bite.

## Human Signals – how we might be stressing out our dogs

Most of these signals we don't even think about when approaching dogs – be it our own or a strange dog.

These are things humans do that might be stressing out a dog:

- Leaning over the dog (hovering)
- Forcing your face into the dog's face
- Petting the dog on the withers (shoulder blade) area
- Petting the dog around the face and especially on the top of the head
- Walking straight into the dog
- Direct eye contact (with a strange dog)
- Hands reaching down to the dog

### Yelling is not the answer!

**Yelling or physical punishment** will only cause behavioral problems down the road for your puppy. Teaching a puppy right from wrong in their new human world can be done with positive reinforcement training. A puppy needs to feel safe in its environment and loved by their new parents (their new human family).

## START YOUNG!

In order for puppies to become better at communication and have the best opportunity of coping with other dogs, it is so important that they have the possibility of being together with other dogs all the way: all kinds of breeds, sizes, colors and appearance. It is the best education your dog can get, and it will save you so many problems later. **Social and environmental training are definitely the two most important things in a puppy's education.**

Puppies can demonstrate a calming signal starting on the day they are delivered.

- Yawning when picked up and handled.
- All puppies yawned 100% of the time when they were picked up.

Signals increase as the puppy grows older and has more control of their body.

Resources:

[Top Tips from Top Trainers](#)

[On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals](#)