



How Dogs Communicate

Understanding Their Language to Lead Better

Why it Matters

Dogs don't speak English — they speak energy, movement, and consequence. Most of their communication is non-verbal, and when we try to talk to them like humans, we often confuse or overwhelm them.

By learning how dogs actually communicate, we become better at training, building trust, and offering leadership that truly makes sense to them.

- Verbal Cue's
- Physical Touch
- Visual Cue's
- + /- Privileges

The 4 Main Types of Canine Communication

Consequences (Rewards + Corrections)

Dogs learn through cause and effect. What works, they repeat. What doesn't, they avoid. You communicate with your dog every time you add or remove something from the environment.

- Positive reinforcement (add a reward): treats, praise, leash freedom, off-leash access, time with you.
- Negative punishment (remove a privilege): turn away, remove toy, end play.
- Clear consequence = clear communication.

Verbal Communication (Tone Over Words)

Dogs don't understand verbal language like humans do — they focus on tone, pacing, and repetition of syllables. A cue is only useful if it's consistent and connected to action.

- Dogs hear tone: excited, calming, warning, praising.
- Keep verbal cues short and consistent (e.g., "Sit," not "Can you sit down, please?").
- Avoid repeating commands — it teaches them to tune out.

Visual Cues & Body Language

Dogs are extremely body-language oriented. Your posture, direction, and motion often speak louder than your words. They learn patterns from your movements.

- Standing tall, facing them = pressure.
- Turning away, soft eyes = disengagement or calm.
- Moving to the kitchen = "is it food time?"
- Standing in a doorway = potential block or invitation.

Physical Touch

Touch can soothe, correct, or overstimulate. Dogs also use body contact to communicate with one another — nudges, pawing, leaning, and play-bumping are all part of their natural language.

- Gentle petting = comfort or praise.
- Touch to redirect = interrupter or guidance.
- Body blocking or leash pressure = spatial communication.

