



Regina
Humane
Society

Lesson Three

“Do You Speak Dog?”

Dogs do not communicate in the same way as people – they cannot tell us with words when they are uncomfortable, upset, or feeling ill. Instead, dogs use their bodies, faces, and the noises they make to tell us how they are feeling. In fact, they give people lots of clues – we just need to know what to look for! Teach students to understand how dogs use their bodies to communicate with people, and recognize these signals in order to be safe around dogs.

Objectives

- Students will increase their understanding and knowledge of dog body language.
- Students will learn how to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations with dogs.

Procedure

Ask students to make faces as if they are angry, sad, happy, or afraid. Explain that just as people have feelings, so do dogs. Though their faces do not express emotion quite the way ours do, dogs indicate their feelings through body language. Explain to students that by observing a dog's body language, we can often tell when a dog is more likely to bite.

Group Discussion: Picture Cards

Using Picture Cards 3.1-3.4, ask students to study each dog's body language and, as a group, brainstorm how each dog might be feeling. As the class brainstorms, write one or two words describing how each dog is feeling.

PC 3.1	Angry, Threatening, Stay Away
PC 3.2	Afraid, Nervous, Leave Alone
PC 3.3	Happy, Relaxed, May Be Friendly
PC 3.4	Playful, Relaxed, May Be Friendly

After students have finished, review the body language each dog is displaying. Begin by pointing to Picture Card 3.1 and asking students “How is this dog feeling?” Give students a hint by silently acting out an angry posture and expression. How do they know what you are feeling? Discuss how your body language and expression is similar to or different from the dog in Picture Card 3.1. Review the clues this dog is giving:

- His ears and body are stiff.
- His tail is stiff and held high.
- He is snarling or growling. His teeth are bared and his lips are curled back.
- He is staring.
- This dog is standing tall and trying to be as big as possible.

Display or point to Picture Card 3.2. Ask students “How is this dog feeling?” In this illustration, the dog is afraid. Silently act out a nervous posture and expression, and then ask students what they think you are feeling. Ask how they know you are nervous. Discuss how your body language is similar to or different from this dog. Review the clues this dog is giving:

- His ears are held low or back.
- His body may be shaking or close to the ground.
- His tail is low or between his legs.
- His mouth is long and pulled back.
- The whites of his eyes are showing more than usual.
- This dog is hunched up and trying to be as small as possible.

Display or point to Picture Card 3.3. Ask students “How is this dog feeling?” Did they guess that this dog is happy? Ask students, “How can you tell this dog is happy?” Review the clues this dog is giving:

- His ears are forward and relaxed.
- His tail is low and wagging.
- His mouth is relaxed and open.

With the owner’s permission, this dog is likely safe to pet.

Display or point to the last illustration. Ask students “How is this dog feeling?” In Picture Card 3.4, the dog is not only happy, he is playful. Review the clues this dog is giving:

- His ears are forward and relaxed.
- His tail is wagging.
- His head is resting on his forepaws.

This dog is engaged in a typical “play bow,” with his head lowered to his front paws and his tailing wagging.

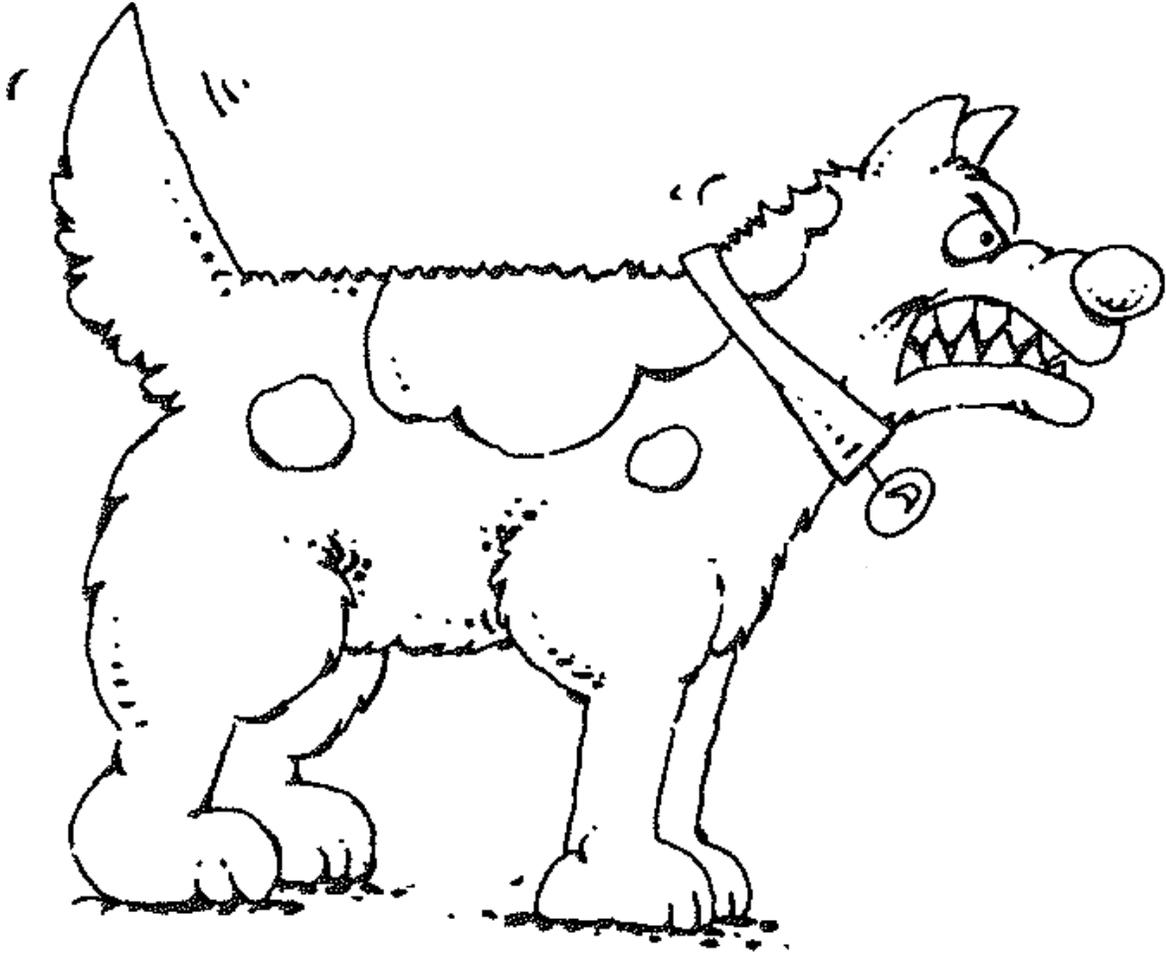
Ask students which dog(s) they think are safe to pet. The correct answers are the happy and playful dogs in Picture Card 3.3 and Picture Card 3.4. However, remind students that even if they meet a dog that is displaying this body language, they must always ask the owner’s permission first. Explain that we should stay away from dogs whose body language exhibits fear or anger, because those dogs are more likely to bite.

Final Discussion

Distribute the appropriate “What is this Dog Telling You?” activity sheet for your class and instruct students to complete the activity. This activity will provide a post-instruction assessment of what the students have learned in this lesson.

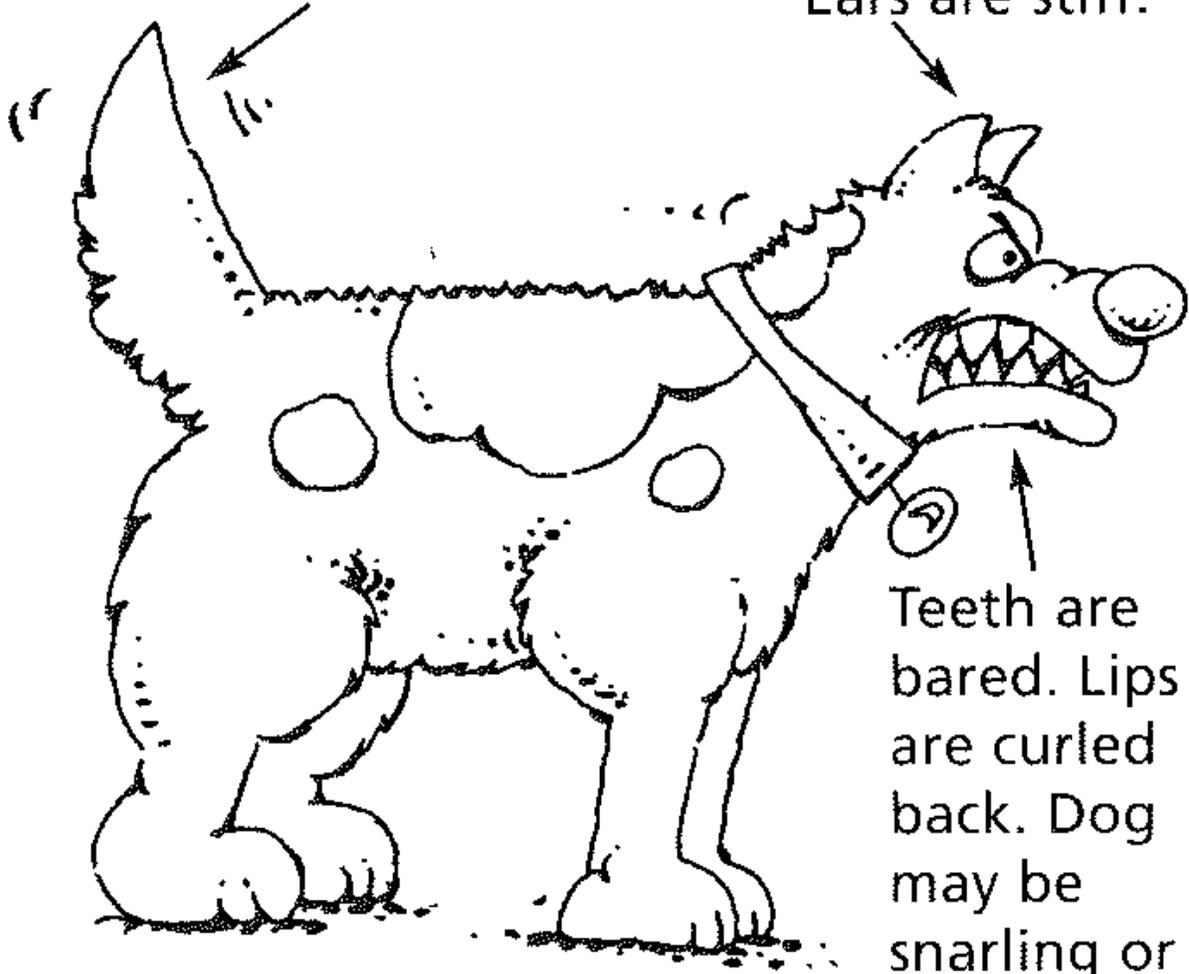
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PC 3.1



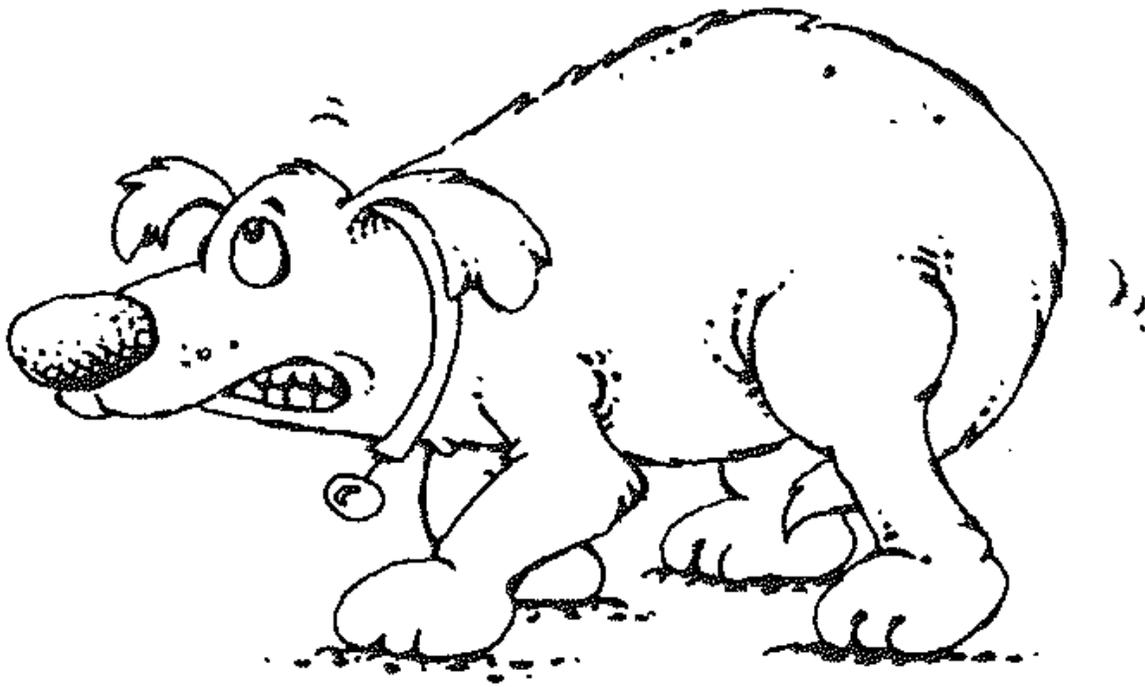
Tail is held high and stiff and may be wagging.

Ears are stiff.



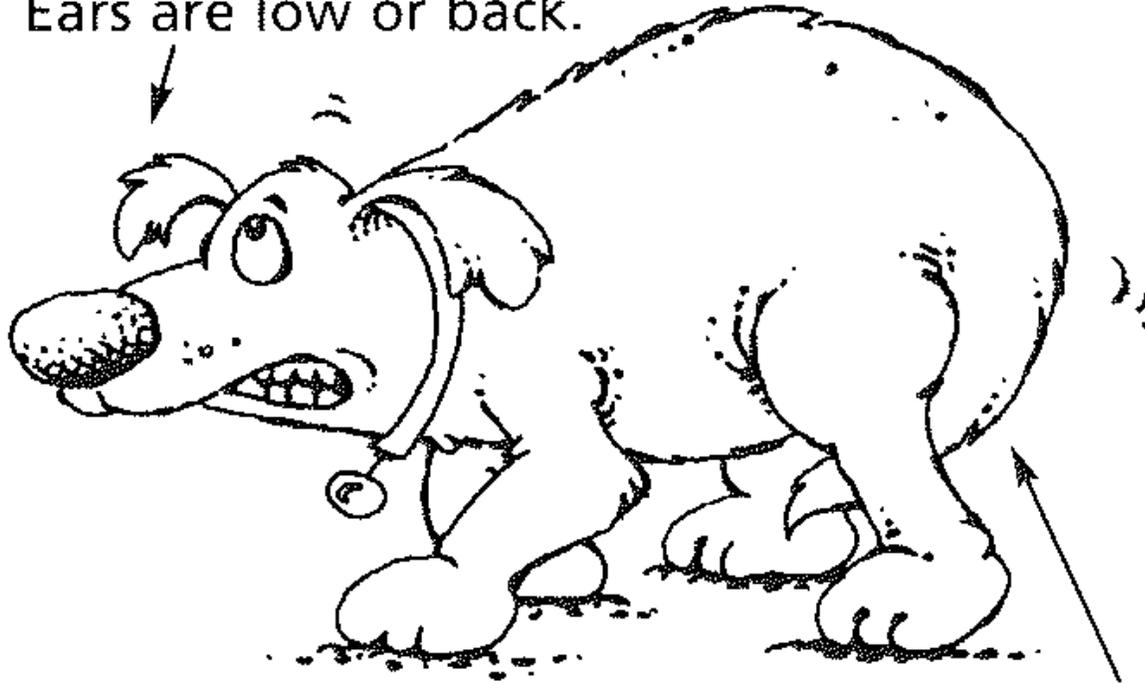
Teeth are bared. Lips are curled back. Dog may be snarling or growling.

PC 3.2



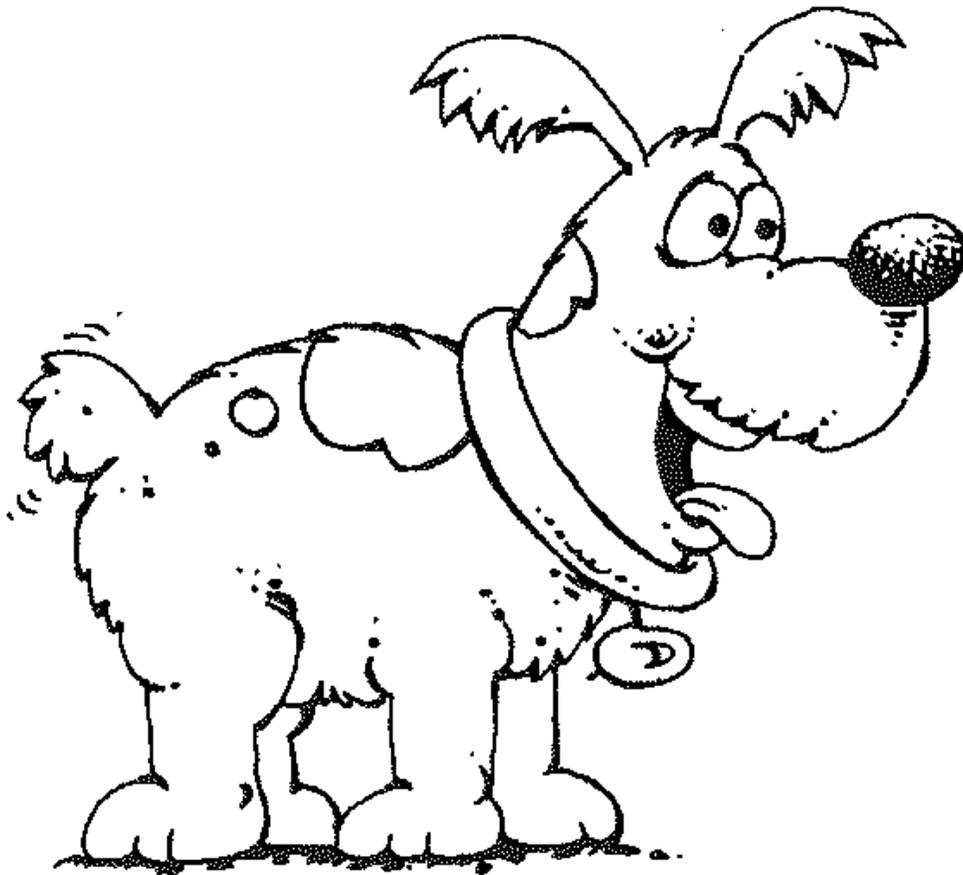
Body may be shaking or close to the ground.

Ears are low or back.



Tail is low or between legs.

PC 3.3





PC 3.4

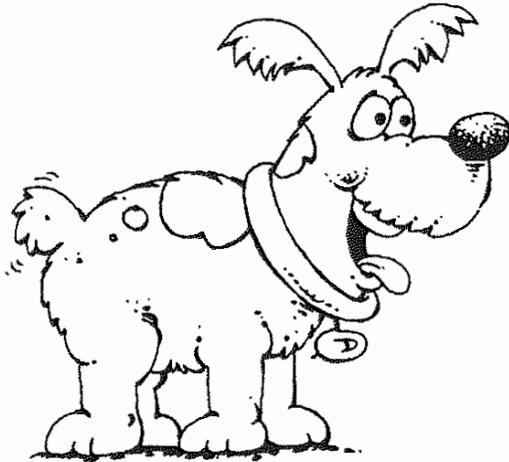




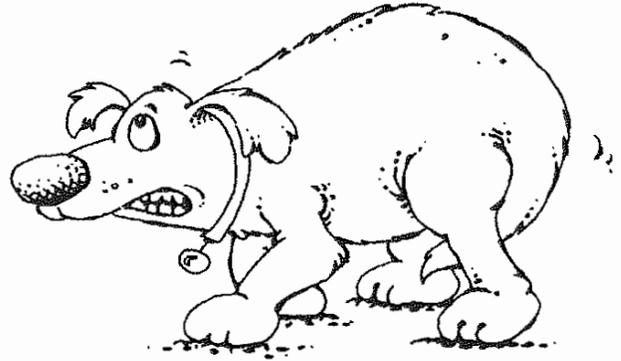
What Is This Dog Telling You?

Just like people, dogs have feelings. Sometimes they are **happy**, **afraid**, **angry**, or **playful**. We can often tell how dogs are feeling by their body language.

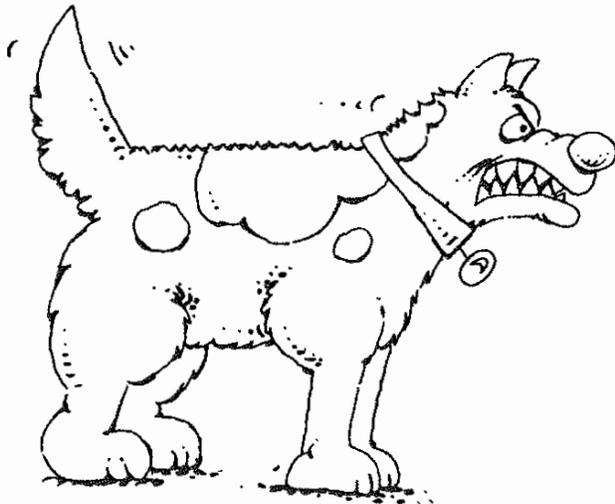
Look at these pictures. In the blanks, write how the dog is feeling. Then write two sentences describing what the dog might be thinking. The first one has been done for you.



This dog is happy.
"I am in a good mood! I wouldn't mind at all if someone patted me!"



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