

Commonly Misunderstood Dog Behaviors

MARS
Petcare

EXPOSING BELLY

A dog lying on its back is not always offering to have their belly rubbed. In fact, this is usually a submissive behavior displayed when a dog is feeling stressed or threatened.



WAGGING TAIL: TENSE & HIGH VS. SOFT & LOW

A high, tense and quick tail wag tends to indicate high arousal, sometimes prior to an aggressive encounter. Soft, low, long tail wags are more friendly and relaxed.



LOOKING GUILTY

People may label behaviors that they think relate to guilt, but often dogs are just responding to the body language or tone of voice from their human.

AVOIDING EYE CONTACT

Dogs may show avoidance when they feel overstimulated, uncomfortable or stressed. People often ignore this cue and continue to advance or place dogs in situations where they feel stressed.



“SMILING” OR SHOWING TEETH

Though it may look like a cheeky grin, this behavior does not necessarily represent happiness like it might for a human. It may be what's known as an “appeasement grin.” Tension in the mouth, panting, teeth bared and/or snarling can also be related to a dog feeling stressed or threatened in some way.

