



Signs of Stress In Dogs

The list below includes **some of the behaviors** that dogs can signal when they are feeling stressed. Stress is the cause of many aggressive, fearful, and anxious behaviors (such as barking, growling, lunging, etc.). You can prevent these behaviors by monitoring your dog's level of stress and by reading their body language signals.

- **Barking**, which may vary in pitch and speed.
- **Holding breath.**
- **Puffing.** Puffing is when a dog rapidly exhales a small amount of air that causes her cheeks to puff out.
- **Panting.** Unusual panting or more intense than what your dog normally does can indicate stress.
- **Stress panting** when there is no source of dog getting warm and dog is still panting.
- **Tongue flick** not to be confused with licking of the lips. A tongue quickly darting out similar to a snake.
- **Yawning.** The dog above did this yawn every time a near by human made eye contact. The yawn was very elaborate and dramatic.
- **Drooling.** Especially if drooling is abnormal for the dog.



Barking, ears held down and back, whites of eyes showing





Whites of eyes showing, tight mouth, staring

- **Low ear carriage.**
- **Slow Tail Wag.** A tail wag that does not include the dog's spine (butt wiggle) is NOT friendly.
- **Tail tucked between hind legs.**
- **Unable to eat.** If your dog took food a moment ago, and abruptly refuses food, evaluate the environment and see what may be causing stress.
- **Unable to play.** If your dog is normally playful and suddenly can't play.
- **Stiffness, stillness, or complete silence.**
- **Pacing or unable to relax.**
- **Diarrhea/bowel movements.**
- **Urination and/or marking.**
- **Coughing or sneezing.**
- **Shedding.** Stress shedding, can be accompanied by dandruff.

- **Whale eye and tight mouth** as the result of being hugged. Not all dogs love being hugged.
- **Blinking eyes.**
- **Deliberate eye blinks.**
- **Slow eye blinks.**
- **Squinting eyes.**
- **Staring.**
- **90-degree head turn.**
- **Whale eye,** whites of eyes showing because dog is fearful of being reached over.
- **Turning away/avoiding eye contact.**



Stiffness, tight mouth, widened eyes



90-degree head turn



Paw lift



Growling, head lowered, ears down

- **Paw lifting;** this is an appeasing gesture, which is shown by a dog that is intimidated.
- **Sweaty paws.**
- **Trembling** as if cold.
- **Shaking** as if shaking off water.
- **Glazed over expression,** raised chin and closed tight mouth.
- **Increased activity.**
- **Decreased activity.**
- **Scratching.**
- **“Spacing out”.**
- **Barking, growling, lunging, or attempting to bite** other dogs or people.

If any signs of stress appear while you are interacting with or observing your dog, it is likely that your dog is stressed.

To be sure, remove the suspected stressor, then have it reappear. Watch for signs of stress. If the signs consistently appear when the stressor appears, the two are linked.



Signs of Stress Worksheet



Instructions: In the center column, list the signs of stress that you observe in your dog. For each sign of stress list the trigger. A trigger can be another dog, a stranger or a loud noise. Whatever causes your dog stress is what you list as the trigger. The comments column is for you to take notes.

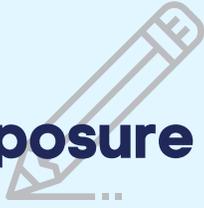
All training should be sub-threshold, which means that your dog should show mild no signs of stress, or at the most, only mild stress during training sessions.

Any trigger that causes your dog stress needs to be paired with treats and toys. So that ultimately what had caused your dog stress becomes a signal for joy.

Trigger	Signs of Stress	Comments



Graded Exposure Worksheet



Everything your dog learns is a building block and **builds on the next set of lessons**. Behavior modification is not any different. When starting training, you want to expose your dog to each "grade," such as Kindergarten then Elementary School, without skipping any grades. Skipping a grade will result in your dog flunking the material, being unable to handle that level of exposure.

In training, each exposure event must be paired with food or toys. Just exposing your dog to triggers risks increasing fear by **sensitizing** your dog to the trigger.

When working with triggers that cause fear, **lifelong pairing of food or toys should be used**. Fear is resistant to extinction, as it is what helps dogs (and us!) survive.

Instructions: Use this chart to depict the level of exposure your dog is ready for when exposed to their stress-inducing triggers:

For the **Grade Level** column, select one of the following:

- Preschool
- Kindergarten
- Elementary school
- Highschool
- College
- Masters
- Ph.D.

Trigger	Grade Level	Comments



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Angelica owns and operates Courteous Canine, Inc. a force free dog training school in Lutz, Florida that also offers sport training, behavior consultations, board-and-train, day care, and pet sitting. For more information, visit www.CourteousCanine.com.



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