

Knowing Dogs 101: Staff Training for Pet Care Centers

Dog Language

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This staff workbook belongs to:



Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language Staff Workbook
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Published by:
The Dog Gurus
1312 Harvard St.
Houston, TX 77008
www.TheDogGurus.com

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Bennett, Robin and Briggs, Susan
Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language
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Cover by Amanda Nelson at Nvoke Design

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Program Goals

Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language

Welcome to the Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language, developed and produced by Robin Bennett and Susan Briggs. Information for this staff-training program is from the book, Off-Leash Dog Play: A Complete Guide to Safety & Fun, by Robin Bennett and Susan Briggs. The program has been designed so procedures discussed can be customized to your specific pet care center.

Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language was developed to keep pet care providers safe while working with dogs in a professional pet care center. Dogs have a language that they use to communicate with each other, with humans and with other animals. When you learn and understand their language you'll recognize warning signs and signals that the dog is not comfortable and how to safely respond.

We also want dogs that feel comfortable and enjoy their experience in a professional pet care center. The information included in the Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language program helps pet care providers recognize the early warning signs of discomfort and how to take action to make each dog comfortable. This will result in happier and healthier dogs that make our job easier, and satisfied clients that keep coming back.

We are passionate about providing the information pet care providers need to be successful. Knowing Dogs 101: Dog Language, is a key foundation for further study. Dogs have a lot to teach us and we invite you to join us in learning and understanding their behaviors.

Robin & Susan



For those who are serious about training their staff in safe off-leash dog play, we invite you to become members of our online community at www.TheDogGurus.com where you can earn badges for using this resource and obtain other exclusive information on how to run a safe off-leash play program.

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Module Information and Tools

The staff workbook is designed to be a resource of material covered in each training session for your ongoing reference. It is intended that you add your own notes to the resource material printed from the teaching presentations. The workbook also provides a summary of your progress in learning the material and developing skills during the training. Finally, the workbook includes evaluation questions and exercises of material learned, activity notes and case study observation results. We anticipate the workbook will get a lot of wear and tear during your adventure in learning dog language. Enjoy the experience!

The following symbols are used in the workbook to alert you to an activity you will complete while watching the teaching sessions: a hand-out customized for your pet care center, a hands-on activity that you will perform after the end of the training session, a shift tip to continue the learning process on-the-job, or a place for you to write down questions you have for your supervisor about applying the material to your job.



This symbol indicates there is an activity for you to complete in your guide during the session.



This symbol indicates you will receive a separate handout from your supervisor of information that is specific to your pet care center.



This symbol indicates that there is a hands-on activity for you to complete in your pet center using the material learned in the module.



This symbol indicates there are suggested shift tips to take on-the-job during your shift to continue the learning from the module.



This symbol indicates the area for you to write down questions you have for your supervisor from this module.

SAMPLE PAGES

Personal Learning Journal

The chart below is a personal learning journal you can use to track your progress as you complete this course. The course is self-paced as directed by your supervisor and each module builds on material presented earlier. It is important that you have a good understanding of the material presented in each module and are able to apply it when working with dogs before you proceed to viewing new material in the next module.

The Personal Learning Journal chart will help you track your progress regarding date you complete the viewing of each module and the related hands-on activity. The journal also tracks your evaluation score from each module with a goal of 80% to be achieved prior to proceeding to the next module. You should also have completed the hands-on activity and received either an *Excellent* or *Satisfactory* score from your supervisor. Finally, you should feel either *Good* or *Very Comfortable* applying the knowledge and skills from the module to your job working with dogs. If you feel like another viewing of the module and more practice time would be helpful, then stop your progress and spend extra time with that material.

Module	Viewing Date	Evaluation Score	Hands-on Activity Date Completed	Hands-on Activity Feedback	Are you able to apply to your job?
1 – Dogs 101					
2 – Body Language Basics					
3 – Human & Dog Greetings					
4 – Emotional States					
5 – Dogs in Stress					
6 – Dog Aggression					
7 – Leadership					
8 – Social Interactions					

The following pre-course assessment is a tool for you and your supervisor to know your current base of knowledge. **It does not matter how you do on the pre-course assessment!** Your goal is improvement in knowledge and skills after completing the course. Relax and just answer the following questions the best you can with the knowledge and skills you have today.

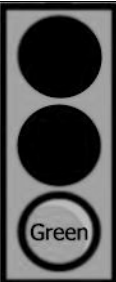

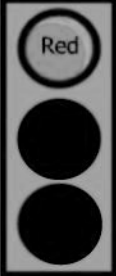
Module 2: Body Language Basics Study Aids

Our learning begins using photographs to ensure the subtle differences in postures are noted and understood. As you progress through the course we will add video. Video will often be shown in slow motion to facilitate learning as regular motion is very fast for the human eye.

Dog Language

- Dogs communicate with body postures, facial expressions and vocalizations
- Much of the language is subtle and occurs extremely fast
- To avoid miscommunications we need to learn their language

Dog Management Traffic Signal

Management Signal	Color	Meaning
	Green	Positive situation for approach & dog management.
	Yellow	Concern for miscommunication or conflict. Monitor situation with caution. Watch for signs of stress, fear, alert or other warning signals.
	Red	High risk, work to diffuse situation or safely exit. Risk of conflict is increased due to high arousal, extreme stress, or fear.

Off-Leash Dog Play: Guide for Safety & Fun, *printed with permission*

Body Posture Continuum



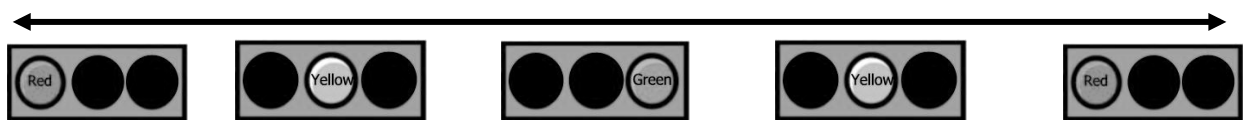
Confident



Neutral & Relaxed



Fearful or Subordinate

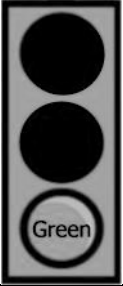
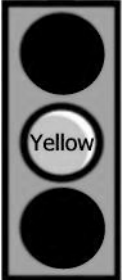


Confident	Neutral & Relaxed	Fearful & Subordinate
Tall, weight forward on front legs	Balanced on all four legs	Low, weight shifted backward toward rear
Dog appears large		Dog appears small
Stiff legs	Lacks tension	Legs crouched
Body movement is stiff and tense	Movement is relaxed, loose and curvy	Body movement is tense and slow

Ear Positions

- Neutral position (natural position)
- Forward from neutral
- Backward from neutral
- Flattened against head
- Sideways

Ear Management Traffic Signal

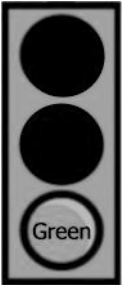
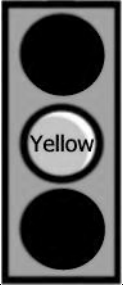
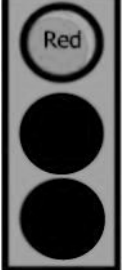
Management Signal	Ear Position	Dog Emotion	Meaning
	Neutral	I'm at ease	Relaxed
	Erect	What's that?	Attentive, Interest
	Backward	I'm no threat	Friendly, Subordinate
	Forward	I'm in charge	Confident
	Flattened	I'm scared	Crete
	Spread Sideways	I'm not sure	Am unsure

Off-Leash Dog Play: Guide for Safety & Fun, *printed with permission*

Tail Positions

- Neutral position (normal carriage)
- High – horizontal or higher
- Low
- Speed of wag

Tail Management Traffic Signal

Management Signal	Tail Position Or Movement	Dog Emotion	Meaning
	Neutral position	I'm at ease	Relaxed
	Large wags at moderate speed; may be in circles	I like you	Friendly, Happy
	Small wags at moderate speed	Hello	Friendly Greeting
	Wags at slow speed	I like that I don't understand	Pleased Problem solving
	High position	I'm in charge	Confident
	Low position	I'm no threat	Subordinate (less confident)
	Fast small wags	I'm interested	Excitement
	Slow & small rhythmic wags	I'm watching with concern	On guard

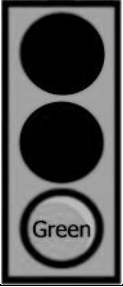

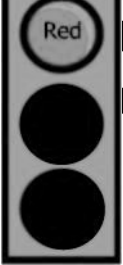
Facial Tension

- Neutral expression: muscles loose and relaxed
- Tense: visible and pronounced wrinkles around muzzle and forehead

Eyes

- Neutral: soft eyes and small pupils
- Larger pupil: higher level of arousal
- Hard eyes and dilated pupil: high confidence or threat
- Half-moon eyes (whites visible): fearful state
- Smaller and elongated: passive, less confident signal

Facial Expression (Eyes & Muzzle) Management Traffic Signals

Management Signal	Facial Expression	Dog Emotion	Meaning
	Relaxed muzzle & forehead	I'm happy	Relaxed
	Soft eyes	I'm happy	Relaxed
	Blinking eyes	I'm not threatened	Friendly, less confident
	Look away; avoids eye contact	I'm not threatened	Less confident, lower in rank
	Mouth slightly opened or softly closed	I'm happy	Relaxed
	Slight wrinkling of muzzle & forehead	I'm concerned	Alert
	Narrow elongated eyes	I'm no threat	Less confident
	Mouth pursed forward in "C" shape & mostly closed	Go away	Annoyed; confident dog
	Lips drawn back & mostly closed	Go away	Annoyed; subordinate dog
	Mouth wide open, lips drawn back with panting	I'm afraid I'm in pain	Fear in a less confident dog, stress signal
	Hard eyes with direct staring	I challenge you Stop that!	Threat signal
	Half moon eyes	I'm scared	Threat signal
	Mouth pursed forward in "C" shape & showing teeth	Go away	Warning; confident dog
	Lips drawn back & showing a lot of teeth	Go away	Warning; fearful dog
	Mouth closed tight with tension	I challenge you Stop that!	Threat signal

All of these “words” put together communicate how the dog is feeling. You will look at each “word”: the body posture, ear position, tail carriage and facial expression together to accurately read each dog. Understanding the complete sentence will keep you safe when working with dogs in your pet care center.

Reading Body Language



Notes:



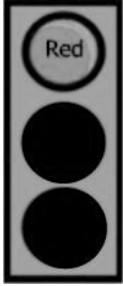
Scent Communication

- Most highly developed sense
- Often first sense used in communication
- Eliminations provide long distance communication
- Dogs sniff in common pattern during greeting

Vocal Communication

- Back-up body language signals
- Differ in sounds and meanings
 - Barking
 - Growling
 - Howling
 - Whining
 - Whimpering
 - Yelping
 - Screaming
 - Champing

Vocal Management Traffic Signal

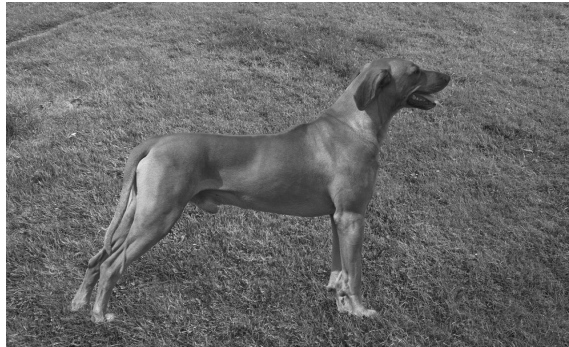
Management Signal	Sound	Dog Emotion	Meaning
	Short bark "ruff"	Hello, let's play	Pleasure & excitement
	Bark rising in pitch	This is fun	Enjoyable play
	Howl	I hear you	Group howl
	Champing	I'm satisfied	Friendly & no threat
	Growl (soft & playful)	I want to play	Playful & excited
	Whine	I want	Excited & eager
	Rapid barking	Alerting the pack	Alert call or alarm bark
	High pitch barking	Help, I don't like this	Stress signal
	Single sharp bark	Stop! What's that?	Surprise or annoyance
	Soft short howl	Stop!	Warning
	Whine (low)	What's that?	Alert
	Non-committal bark	I'm not sure about this!	Anxious
	Long deep low growl	Back off! Beware!	Annoyed confident dog
	Growl-bark	I'm upset! I'm frightened!	Fearful annoyed dog that if pushed may fight
	Long growl with pitch changes	I'm very terrified!	Extreme fear of more submissive dog
	Whine	I need	Distress or fear
	Whimper	I hurt, I'm scared	Stress
	Yelp	I'm hurt & scared	Injured; physically or emotionally
	Scream	Help, Help! I'm very scared!	Extreme fear; sound can trigger prey drive in other dogs



Identify the traffic color signal of each dog photo shown during the session.



Traffic Signal Color: _____



Traffic Signal Color: _____



Traffic Signal Color: _____



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Summary

- Look first at a dog's body posture
- Green postures are safe to approach and indicate good health
- Yellow postures are a warning signal – take action for your safety or for dog's health
- Red postures indicate an unsafe situation for you or the dog

Module 2: Body Language Basics Evaluation

The red traffic signal indicates a high-risk situation for your safety due to high arousal, extreme stress or fear in the dog.

- a. True
- b. False



2. How does the confident dog posture differ from the neutral posture?
3. How does the fearful or subordinate posture differ from the neutral posture?
4. High pitch barking indicates what emotion and meaning in a dog?
5. In the vocal communications chart below complete the following:
 - a. Assign appropriate traffic color signal to each sound (green, yellow or red)
 - b. Match the Sound to the vocal emotion & meaning (A through H)

Signal Color	Emotion Letter	Sound	Emotion & Meaning
	1.	Single sharp bark	A. I'm not sure about this. Anxious
	2.	Whine	B. Stop! What's that? Alert
	3.	Growl-bark	C. I'm hurt & scared. Injured-physically or emotionally
	4.	Moaning bark	D. Hello, let's play. Pleasure & excitement
	5.	Yelp	E. Stop! Warning
	6.	Long, deep, low growl	F. I want. Excited & Eager
	7.	Short bark, "ruff"	G. Back off! Beware! Annoyed & confident
	8.	Soft, short growl	H. I'm upset & frightened. Fearful & annoyed

6. Review the following pictures and for each indicate the traffic signal color with your reason. Look above each photo for the body part in bold that you should focus on for your response (e.g., **Body Posture**, **Ears**, **Tails & Facial Expression**).

Body Posture

a.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

Body Posture

b.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

Ears

c.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

Ears

d.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

Tails

e.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

_____**Tails**

f.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

_____**Facial Expression**

g.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

_____**Facial Expression**

h.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

Facial Expression

i.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____

Facial Expression

j.



Traffic Signal Color: _____

Reasons: _____



During your work shift be observant of dog postures, facial expressions & ear and tail positions. Complete the chart below from your observations of the dogs in your pet center:

Body Signal	Dog Name & Breed	Describe Situation & Reason for Language
Ears backward		
Ears erect		
Tail large waves at moderate speed		
Tail low position		
Half moon eyes		
Mouth open, lips drawn back with panting		



My Questions



Shift Tips

1. Walk through your center and focus on the position of dog ears:
 - a. Their normal ear posture
 - b. Postures forward or backward from normal
2. Walk through your center and focus on the position of dog tails:
 - a. Their normal carriage
 - b. Tails higher or normal from normal

Update your progress in your Personal Learning Journal

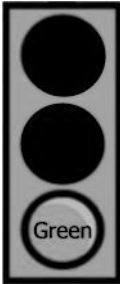

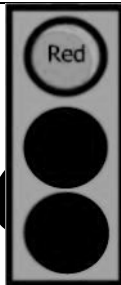
SAMPLE PDF

Module 8: Social Interactions Study Aids

Social Behavior Types

While you are watching the session, add notes to the chart on the definition and examples of each behavior type.

Behavior Type	Definition & Examples
Greeting Ritual	
Appeasement & Pacifying Gestures	
Confidence Behaviors	
Displacement Behaviors	
Correcting Behaviors	
Warning Behaviors	

Management Signal	Social Gesture
	Back Roll
	Blinking
	Champing
	Licking
	Look Away
	Mounting - during play
	Muzzle Nudge
	Pawing – paw lift during greeting
	Pawing – paw lift when curious
	Piloerection – excitement only
	Shoulder Bump
	Side Roll
	Side Turn
	Snarl
	Stand Over – during play
	Staring – when interested or curious
	Twist Movement
	Yawn - friendly
	Lip Lick
	Look Away
	Muzzle Grasp
	Pawing – anticipation of attention getting
	Piloerection – neck & shoulders of confident dog
	Scratching
	Shake-off
	Sniffing
	Stand Over – not accepted by more confident dog
	Staring Stare
	Staring - Alerting
	Yawn - feels uncomfortable or stress
	Guarding
	Pawing – on back of more confident dog, not accepted
	Piloerection – full back & tail
	Staring – guarding, targeting, predation, threatening

Why are yellow gestures important?

Gestures to Humans

- Blinking
- Displacement
- Hip Nudge
- Pawing
- Smile
- Yawn



Look at the photo pairs of the social gestures; how do you determine the traffic signal color differences?



Traffic Signal Color _____

Reason _____



Traffic Signal Color _____

Reason _____



Traffic Signal Color _____

Reason _____



Traffic Signal Color _____

Reason _____



Traffic Signal Color _____

Reason _____



Traffic Signal Color _____

Reason _____

Safe Dog Handling

- Take time to observe dog prior to handling or entering enclosure
- Remember to use good leader qualities and tools
- Green postures and states - safe to handle
- Yellow postures and states – modify your posture, position or situation to get to green
- Red postures and states – stop and focus on safety for you and other dogs; alert your supervisor

Module 8: Social Interactions Evaluation



1. Match the social behavior type to its description in the chart below.

Behavior Letter		Social Behavior Description		Social Behavior Type
	1.	Reinforce higher rank of a dog	A.	Displacement Behaviors
	2.	Normal behavior shown at an inappropriate time	B.	Appeasement Behaviors
	3.	Generally relate to space	C.	Warning Behaviors
	4.	Used by adult dogs when another dog displays rude or inappropriate behavior	D.	Confidence Behaviors
	5.	Used to turn off threats or gain cooperation	E.	Relaxed Behaviors
	6.	Active displays that show respect	F.	Correcting Behaviors

2. For each social gesture in the chart below indicate the appropriate traffic signal color (some may belong to more than one color).

Social Gesture	Green	Yellow	Red
Blinking			
Freezing			
Scratching			
Pawing			
Shake-off			
Snarl			
Yawning			
Piloerection			

3. In yellow handling situations, how will you change your behavior to stay safe?

4. For each photo below list the appropriate traffic signal color and social behavior displayed.



a.

Traffic Signal Color: _____

Social Gesture: _____



b.

Traffic Signal Color: _____

Social Gesture: _____



c.

Traffic Signal Color: _____

Social Gesture: _____



d.

Traffic Signal Color: _____

Social Gesture: _____



Read the 3 case studies below and describe how you would handle each situation. Discuss your answers with your supervisor and add notes from your supervisor's feedback.

Case Study	Tip from Supervisor
1 – Walking dog	
2 – Grooming dog	
3 – Dog in lobby	

Case Study 1

You have been called to the lobby to walk Fifi, an English bulldog, to her boarding enclosure. This is Fifi's first visit and she is 7 years old. When you walk to the lobby, Fifi looks away, lip licks, and lowers her head. When you take the leash from the owner Fifi tries to move; what do you do?

Case Study 2

You are assigned to bathe Rocky, a sheltland sheepdog, and read on the grooming notes that he hates having his nails trimmed. When you go to get Rocky out of the groom cage, he looks away and starts scratching his ear. He ignores you when you call his name; what do you do to get Rocky out of the cage? What can you do to make the grooming experience more comfortable for Rocky?

Case Study 3

A potential client that just moved to town is visiting your pet care center for a tour and has brought her dog Ginger with her. Ginger is a German shepherd mix and you have been asked to sit with Ginger while another staff member gives Ginger's owner a tour of the pet center. Her owner stated that since Ginger is a very shy dog it is very important that she is comfortable with the pet care staff. Ginger moves to the end of her leash avoiding eye contact with you and sniffs the floor when the owner hands you the leash. What will you do to get Ginger comfortable with you?



Questions:

Shift Tips:

1. Pick three social gestures and look for them today.

Update your progress in your Personal Learning Journal

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have completed the study and evaluation portions of Knowing Dogs: 101. After your supervisor reviews this module, take the post-course assessment. We hope you are pleased with the improvement in your score!