

# Wolf Body language

Contributed by All data on this page was taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolf>  
Sunday, 25 February 2007  
Last Updated Sunday, 20 May 2007

Wolves can visually communicate an impressive variety of expressions and moods that range from subtler signals, such as a slight shift in weight, to the more obvious ones, like rolling on the back as a sign of complete submission.

**Dominance** – A dominant wolf stands stiff legged and tall. The ears are erect and forward, and the hackles bristle slightly. Often the tail is held vertical and curled toward the back. This display shows the wolf's rank to all others in the pack. A dominant wolf may stare penetratingly at a submissive one, pin it to the ground, "ride up" on its shoulders, or even stand on its hind legs.

**Submission (active)** – In active submission, the entire body is lowered, and the lips and ears are drawn back. Sometimes active submission is accompanied by muzzle licking, or the rapid thrusting out of the tongue and lowering of the hindquarters. The tail is placed down, or halfway or fully between the legs, and the muzzle often points up to the more dominant animal. The back may be partially arched as the submissive wolf humbles itself to its superior; a more arched back and more tucked tail indicate a greater level of submission.

**Submission (passive)** – Passive submission is more intense than active submission. The wolf rolls on its back and exposes its vulnerable throat and underside. The paws are drawn into the body. This is often accompanied by whimpering.

**Anger** – An angry wolf's ears are erect, and its fur bristles. The lips may curl up or pull back, and the incisors are displayed. The wolf may also arch its back, lash out, or snarl.

**Fear** – A frightened wolf tries to make its body look small and therefore less conspicuous. The ears flatten down against the head, and the tail may be tucked between the legs, as with a submissive wolf. There may also be whimpering or barks of fear, and the wolf may arch its back.

**Defensive** – A defensive wolf flattens its ears against its head.

**Aggression** – An aggressive wolf snarls and its fur bristles. The wolf may crouch, ready to attack if necessary.

Suspicion – Pulling back of the ears shows a wolf is suspicious. In addition, the wolf narrows its eyes. The tail of a wolf that senses danger points straight out, parallel to the ground.

Relaxedness – A relaxed wolf's tail points straight down, and the wolf may rest sphinx-like or on its side. The wolf may also wag its tail. The further down the tail droops, the more relaxed the wolf is.

Tension – An aroused wolf's tail points straight out, and the wolf may crouch as if ready to spring.

Happiness – As dogs do, a wolf may wag its tail if it is in a joyful mood. The tongue may loll out of the mouth.

Hunting – A wolf that is hunting is tensed, and therefore the tail is horizontal and straight.

Playfulness – A playful wolf holds its tail high and wags it. The wolf may frolic and dance around, or bow by placing the front of its body down to the ground, while holding the rear high, sometimes wagged. This is reminiscent of the playful behavior demonstrated by domestic dogs.

All data on this page was taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolf>