

*An Owner's Manual for:*

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CANINE BODY  
LANGUAGE  
YOUR DOG IS TRYING TO  
TELL YOU SOMETHING

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*by the*  
AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



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### **ABOUT THIS SERIES**

At the AKC, we know better than anyone that your dog can't be treated like a car or an appliance, but we've named this series "An Owner's Manual" because sometimes you probably wish your lovable companions came with one.

These concise guides give you the tools, tips, and direction to be a responsible and confident dog owner who brings out the best in your dog. Give them a test drive!



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With the possible exception of Dr. Doolittle, no one is having a conversation with a dog. You probably talk to your dog. But he doesn't reply.

Still, dogs communicate their wants and needs, their happiness and fear, and quite effectively, their aggression. Their messages are conveyed primarily through body language (though barks, growls and whimpers have distinct meanings). So it's important to recognize what these signals mean.



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## HAPPINESS

A happy dog is relaxed in posture, perhaps lying with one paw tucked under his body. If he's in a playful mood, he's panting, enthusiastically wagging his tail and could crouch into a "play bow." His ears might be perked up and he could be bouncing or jumping with excitement.

A dog will lick another dog's face when they greet each other to indicate friendliness. A dog will lick a person's hand after sniffing it as a form of greeting.



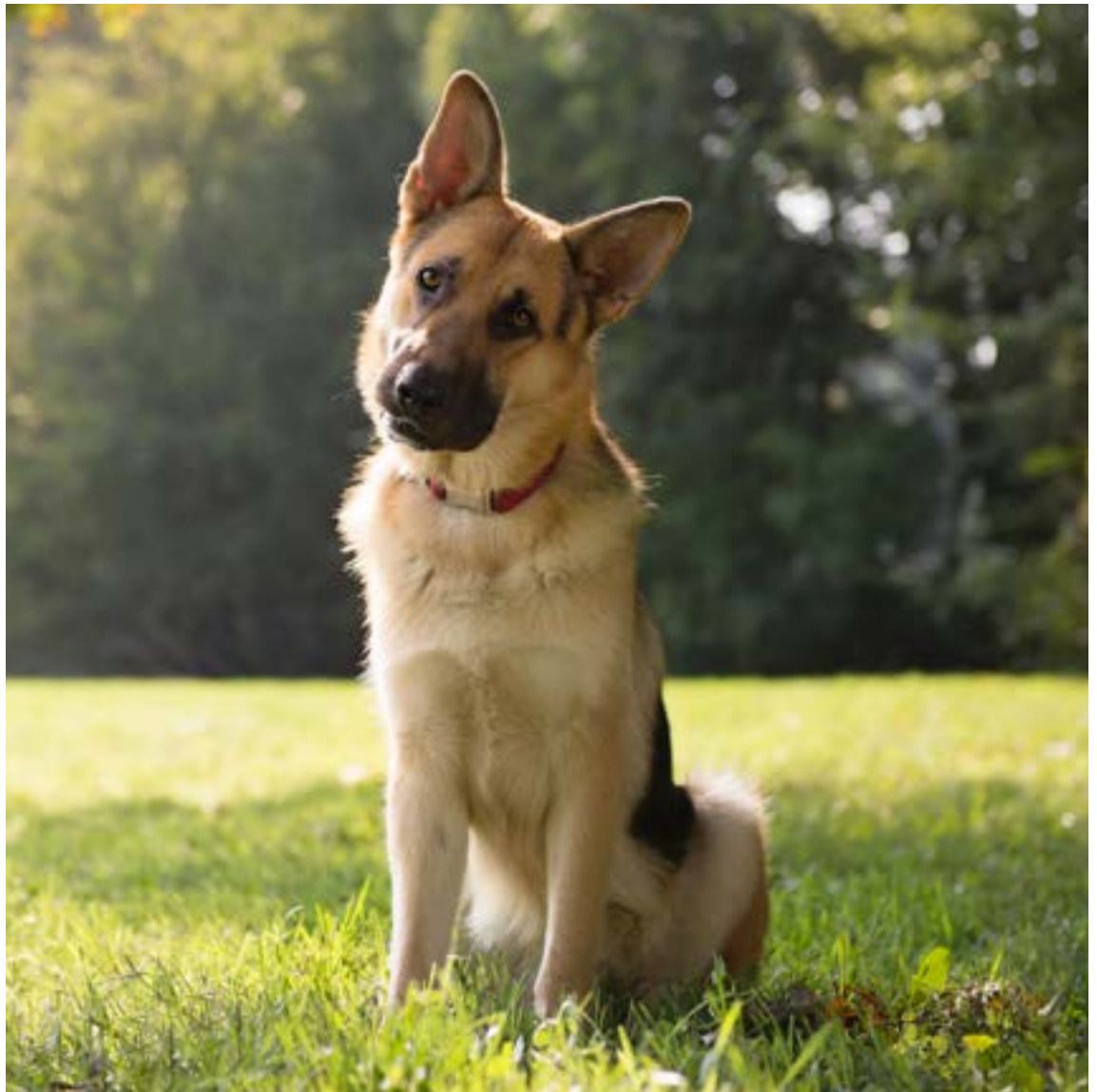
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## **INTEREST/CURIOSITY**

A dog tilting his head to either side indicates curiosity. Ears pointed forward, neck craned and eyes intense are signs that a dog's interest has been peaked. His body tenses, his tail is high or slowly wagging. A dog focused on a squirrel would exhibit this body language, for example.



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## PERSUASION

A dog might stamp its feet, alternating its left and right front legs, when he wants something, or wants its owner's attention. A long stare also could be a sign that a dog wants something.



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## **ANXIETY/FEAR**

An anxious dog might exhibit such avoidance behaviors as turning head away, hiding behind a person or object, or rolling onto his back to be submissive. Fear prompts a dog to put his tail between his legs, to flatten and lay back his ears, to crouch and possibly tremble.



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## **AGGRESSION**

An aggressive dog will expose his teeth, narrow his eyes and tense his body. The dog is growling, snarling, aggressively barking and possibly snapping his jaw. A dog is preparing to attack when he freezes his position, standing with legs splayed and head low.



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## SUBMISSION

A submissive dog bows his head and flattens his ears. His tail might be tucked between his legs or he might raise a front paw. Of course, a submissive dog will lie on his back, belly up. A form of teeth baring by some dogs is seen as a submissive grin.



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### **A FINAL POINT**

Keep in mind that your dog's body language is best understood in the context of the situation.

If your dog feels the stranger you've encountered on the street is threatening, he just might bare his teeth and growl to protect you. If he bares his teeth when your cool brother visits, it's probably one of those rare submissive grins.



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Eventually, you'll even learn the subtleties of your dog's body language. You'll know that when he sits and stares at you, he isn't mesmerized by your stunning good looks -- he's inviting you to take him outside.





THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

### WHO AND WHAT WE ARE:

*The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.*



## THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

*But the AKC is so much more! Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families. We:*

- Created the [AKC Humane Fund](#), which supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.
- Offer the [Canine Good Citizen®](#) program: A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 725,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens, and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program's merit and importance.
- Founded [AKC Reunite](#), which has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.
- Created the [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#), which funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over \$24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)
- Conduct thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.
- Offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.
- Support one of the world's largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the [AKC Museum of the Dog](#), and we have the world's largest [dog library](#) at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.





THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

### THANK YOU FOR READING!

*We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner's Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.*



THE FIVE COMMANDS EVERY DOG SHOULD KNOW



CRATE TRAINING



PUPPY FOOD & NUTRITION



PUPPY SOCIALIZATION



WHY DOES MY DOG DO THAT?



WHAT'S HE THINKING?



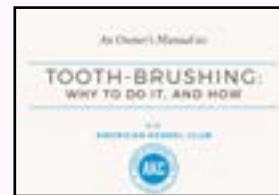
10 ESSENTIAL SKILLS: CGC TEST ITEMS



FIVE TRICKS YOU'LL WANT TO SHOW OFF



THE ALL-PURPOSE GROOMING TOOL KIT



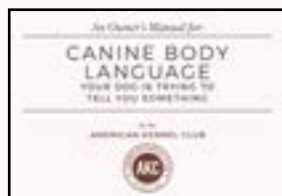
TOOTH-BRUSHING: WHY TO DO IT, AND HOW



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PET GOES MISSING



WHAT ARE ALL THESE VACCINES?



CANINE BODY LANGUAGE: YOUR DOG IS TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING



TRAINING WITH TREATS



PUPPY POINTERS: TIPS FOR SELECTING A CANINE COMPANION



MOVING WITH YOUR PETS