

Pets and Their People

Have you heard about the *Canine Consent Test*? Well let me tell you about it! To start with, a lot of people may think that dogs don't mind being petted anytime or anywhere, however, that may not be so true.

Have you ever leaned down to pet a pup and he leaned away from your touch, stiffened, or turned his head away? The pup is clearly expressing dog body language that's saying that he doesn't want to be touched at this time. If this happens we should respect his request, and leave him alone. It's never a good idea to force our attention on a pet. Most dogs don't like their heads petted, would you? Most dogs like to be petted near their shoulders, chest, and long strokes down their backs.

Ok, so this is the Canine Consent Test:

1. Let the pup come to you.
2. Talk to him, say his name. Is he wiggly and loose ready for petting?
3. If he stays by you, and looks relaxed, soft eyes, wiggly and waggy tail then reach to touch his closest shoulder, scratch him lightly for 3 seconds then stop, put your arm down by your side, and see if he leans into you or takes a step towards you, if he does he is asking to be scratched again. That is a yes, I want to be petted..
4. However, sometimes it's not so easy. Some pets may be nervous. They may let you pet them for 3 seconds and when you stop they don't move towards you or away from you, so in this case try the scratch test again, if again they just stay still and not lean in or away from you take it as a no, and don't pet him again because it may be too nervous to move.
5. If a dog doesn't want to come close to you, or starts to flick its tongue out, starts sniffing the ground, or starts scratching, stay away. These are more serious signs that a dog does not want to have an interaction with you. Walk away.

" Kindness, compassion, and respect" go a long way in the human pet bond. Dogs need their own space just like we do.

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