



Excerpts from "The ABC's of Dog Language" by Anders Hallgren
Learn How Dogs Communicate

The Dog Talks in Various Ways

Touch

Dogs coming close to each other, and maybe even touching, can mean either an attempt to gain trusting affiliation, or a provocation to fight. The distinctions between a threat, a provocation, or an invitation to mate are made by the general context of the situation, and by additional signals.



A dog can initiate bodily contact with another dog and at the same time display signals that show submission or clearly indicate that it wants to play. In such cases, the other dog will not perceive the approach as threatening. However, if a dog is stiff and threatening in its approach to another dog, or in its manner of touching it, a fight can easily be the result.

In play, physical contact is intensive

Humans react essentially the same way. Body contact with strangers is normally taboo. There are a few exceptions though, such as hairdressers, masseurs, physicians, and dentists, who are allowed to touch us. It is as if we make a silent agreement with certain groups, allowing them to touch us as part of their professional duties. However, the unknown person on the street is not permitted to seek physical contact with us. If he/she would try, we would respond with fear or anger.



Touching feels good!



Excerpts from “The ABC’s of Dog Language” by Anders Hallgren
Learn How Dogs Communicate



*Happiness is cuddling a
warm puppy!*

Despite the above, we appreciate being touched by somebody we trust, and we enjoy touching and cuddling. It is okay for us to have physical contact with dogs and small babies. This is probably why people commonly pet dogs and cuddle infants. Our internal need for touching, it seems, can only be satisfied through dogs and babies!

Touching is important for our well-being. An American investigation (Katcher and Friedman, 1980) demonstrates that recovery after heart attacks is significantly faster and more reliable when the patient has a pet. It is important for people to have a soft, living creature to nurture and cuddle.



Based on the research that clearly shows a faster recovery rate for patients who experience touching of a dog, many volunteer organizations now offer “pet visiting” services to people in hospitals and convalescence homes, such as St. John’s Ambulance Therapy Dogs in Vancouver, BC, Canada, who supplied this picture which shows just how it works.