Why is Your Dog Staring?
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Ever noticed your furry friend staring at you and wondered what’s going through their mind? You may wonder if they want something, if something is wrong, or if their stare is simply an expression of love.

Well, it turns out it could be all of the above. A dog’s stare can mean a number of things, so

looking at your dog's body language and the context as to why they're staring at you can help you understand them a bit better.

How dogs use staring to communicate

As our four-legged companions can't use words to communicate with us, they rely on their body language instead. One of the main elements of this is eye contact. By locking eyes with you, your dog may be asking you for something, trying to communicate how they are feeling, or doing their best to understand you. As dogs went through the process of domestication, they also developed a special muscle that raises their inner eyebrows, which gives them the ability to flash us those "puppy dog eyes" we find so hard to resist!

Common reasons your dog may stare at you

To understand you

Dogs grow very attached to their human family members, as we do with them, so they carefully observe our behaviour to work out how we're feeling and what we're up to. You might notice your pup looking at you curiously when you're doing something unfamiliar, like playing an instrument, singing, or playing a game, as they do their best to work out what's going on. They'll also watch for behavioural cues that help them predict your next move, especially those that indicate you're about to take them for walkies or feed them.

To tell you something

Your dog locking eyes with you can also be their way of quietly getting your attention. This could be to let you know they need a toilet break, that they've just heard a suspicious noise, or that they're bored and need some mental or physical stimulation to keep them occupied. If your pup is trying to tell you something, they might also use their body language to direct your attention where they want you or to indicate they want to play.

To communicate their feelings

Sometimes your furry friend's heart-warming gaze simply means that they adore you. In this case, they'll likely have a relaxed posture, accompanied by some soft blinking or a tail wag. This eye contact between the two of you is great for building a strong bond with your pup and is a sign they trust you. This sort of connection is also wonderful for the mental health of you and your pup, as eye contact and bonding moments release the feel-good hormone, oxytocin, which can help you feel more relaxed.

They want something

Dogs have incredibly expressive eyes, and they learn over time that eye contact is a great

persuasion tool among their humans. They'll often stare at you when they want something from you, such as their dinner, a walk, or to play. Dogs will also often use eye contact to let you know when they're not feeling well or have hurt themselves, in a hope that you'll be able to help them. If you sense your pup is looking at you in a pleading way or they don't quite seem their usual self, check for signs of injury, illness, or even the possibility your dog is depressed.

They're threatened

Occasionally, a dog's stare can be a warning sign that they're feeling threatened, they've had their space invaded, or they're feeling possessive over a toy or food. If this is the case, you'll usually notice that they don't blink, and will show signs of dominance or aggression like a lowered head or stiff posture. It's important to recognise when your dog's staring could indicate that they're unhappy, so you can avoid escalating the situation and do some training to overcome the issue.

If you catch your furry friend staring in your direction, it could mean a few different things, so think about what they could be trying to tell you by looking at their body language and the broader context. A lot of the time, they're simply showing their affection or trying to get your attention. For more tips on understanding and caring for your furry companion, check out our blog.

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