

3 Irresistible Behaviors: What Your Dog Wants You to Know

Few pet parents can resist these adorable behaviors when they happen, but often wonder if their dog is trying to tell them something. Your dog is constantly communicating with you, so it's in your court to learn the hidden meanings behind the behaviors so you can respond.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dog lovers agree that one of the most adorable ways dogs communicate with us is through nuzzling
- When your dog nuzzles you, she might be greeting you or seeking attention, showing concern for your mood or your health, asking for a snack, or some other reason
- Another irresistible canine behavior is the inquisitive head tilt
- If your dog gets the zoomies, he's probably burning off pent-up energy, and as a bonus, he's making you laugh

Our dogs communicate with us constantly. In fact, almost anything your furry family member does or "says" in your presence is sending a message. Some of these communication techniques are less than desirable, such as leg humping or loud barking for attention.

However, others are beyond endearing, such as that slight tilt of your pup's head in response to your voice (more about this later), or her super enthusiastic, waggly butt greeting when you arrive home. One of my very favorite adorable behaviors many dogs use to communicate with their humans (and each other) is nuzzling.

8 Reasons Dogs Nuzzle

1. **She's saying hello to you** — Canine companions display a variety of greeting behaviors when they lay eyes on (or sniff out) their favorite humans. As mentioned above, a wildly wagging tail is very common, along with spinning, dancing on hind legs, or running about with a toy or some other attention-getting object.

But one of the sweetest, most gentle ways your dog might greet you is to nuzzle your hand or some other available body part with his wet nose. She's saying, "I'm so glad you're home!"

2. **He's asking for attention** — Dogs quickly catch on to the importance of human hands to their existence. After all, it's hands that lower the food bowl to the floor, hold treats, and deliver pets and scratches. Many of us have had the experience, after petting a dog and removing our hand, of having the dog nudge our hand with her nose as if to say, "Please don't stop!"
3. **She's hoping for snacks** — Depending on your history of indulging the behavior, your dog may nuzzle you when you're eating a meal or enjoying a snack on the couch. A gentle nuzzle is letting you know she's there and hoping for a taste; a more persistent nuzzle could mean it's her mealtime as well, and you need to get with the program. Or it could mean you almost always deliver the goods in response to this behavior.

4. **He's displaying dominance or submission** — Some dogs power-nuzzle to show dominance — typically over other dogs, but sometimes people as well. You can usually tell it's about dominance by the persistence or excessiveness of the nuzzling. Interestingly, dogs with submissive tendencies also sometimes nuzzle and lick a more dominant dog's face as a display of respect.
5. **She's concerned about you** — Our dogs are very tuned into our emotions, as well as the state of our health. If you become upset about something in the presence of your dog, don't be surprised if she gently nuzzles you to comfort you. And if you're sick and laid up in bed or on the couch, there's a good chance she'll perform regular nuzzle-checks to comfort you and perhaps to try to sniff out the problem as well.
6. **He's marking you** — Some dogs tend toward possessiveness when it comes to their humans (I'm looking at you, Señor Chihuahua). In addition, their faces contain scent glands, so it's possible some of your dog's nuzzling behavior is an attempt to mark you with his scent to let everyone know you belong to him, and him alone!
7. **She's greeting a new human friend** — Some dogs greet strangers with a sniff, and if their nose approves, they may rub their head against their new friend and nuzzle him/her.
8. **His face is itchy or there's something on it** — Of all the reasons your dog might nuzzle you, this one is purely practical. Dogs with itchy faces like to rub them on things (for example, you) to relieve their discomfort. Dogs with remnants of food or drips of water on their muzzle often find something (for example, you) to use as a napkin.

How About That Adorable Head Tilt?

How cute is this quirky little move? The canine head tilt is definitely one of the more charming behaviors dogs perform. They tend to do it in response to a particular tone of voice or a familiar sound that means something good is about to happen.

Now, to us humans, a dog with his head cocked appears to be trying to understand what we're saying, or what a specific sound might mean. And according to veterinarian Dr. Sara Wooten, we're more or less right. She says the head tilt might indicate that your dog is trying to make sense of what he hears.¹

Experts believe dogs probably tilt their heads when they think what they're hearing might lead to something they enjoy, for example, a treat or a walk. According to Wooten, since dogs understand certain words, a pup who's tilting his head might be trying to pick up a key word or tone change that holds promise.

Another possible reason for head tilting in dogs has to do with the way they hear. Their movable earflaps help them locate the source of sounds. By changing his head position, your dog can better distinguish differences in the time a sound reaches each ear, enabling him to judge how far he is from the sound.

Wooten believes head cocking is probably a natural behavior in dogs that they repeat the more it is reinforced. If you praise your dog or show special interest when he cocks his head (and how can you not?), he'll be more likely to repeat the behavior. Wooten also says there's no evidence that head tilting is associated with a dog's breed, age, or intelligence.

It's important to know the difference between a cute "listening" head tilt and one that is persistent or intermittent and happens without a trigger, as the latter can be a sign of a vestibular disease and requires investigation.

Zoomies!

Just like high-spirited children, sometimes dogs get wildly excited for no apparent reason and dash around in circles or back and forth, stopping abruptly to look at you before taking off again. In case you hadn't heard, the not-so-scientific name for this behavior is "zoomies."

Zoomies, by their very nature, can be quite difficult to capture on camera. Check out this little fellow:

According to veterinarian Dr. Patrick Mahaney, any dog can experience FRAPs, but interestingly, very young puppies may not show their exuberant selves in this way as often as older dogs do because their bodies haven't developed enough to exert such a high level of energy. Healthy and happy adult dogs, on the other hand, can catch a case of the zoomies at any time.²

Animal behaviorists aren't entirely sure why dogs get the zoomies, but a good guess is they're the result of surges of pent-up energy.

Sources and References

[Bark Post](#)

[The Pawsitive Co.](#)

[Southern Living](#)

¹ [VetStreet, September 8, 2015](#)

² [Pet Central, June 22, 2017](#)
