

15 Adorable Ways Your Dog Expresses His Love for You

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When you [get a dog](#), your life changes. Your dog becomes a boisterous new member of your family. He probably eats in your kitchen, and maybe he sleeps on your couch. He might take over your yard and, if he's not too loud, charm your neighbors. He wins you over with his adorable dog behavior and pure happiness when you walk in the door.

Another thing that happens the day you get a dog? You become a dog owner. Sure, that means you're responsible for all the messes he makes. But it also means you become obsessed with figuring out what your dog is feeling. You find yourself constantly guessing at the motivation behind his dog behavior. And at least once in a while, you'll try to figure out whether your dog loves you. Here are the ways his dog behavior might tell you.

1. He uses the right body language



Your dog's body language can tell you he loves you. | iStock.com/Chalabala

The New York Times reports that your dog's [body language is a clear sign](#) he loves you. Most of us know some of the obvious body-language signs. Do your dog's ears perk up when you walk in the room? Does he wriggle around excitedly when you open the front door? Or does his tail wag vigorously? That means he's happy, as does a more recently discovered feature of dog body language. "When dogs feel fundamentally positive about something or someone, their tails wag more to the right side of their rumps," according to the New York Times. "When they have

negative feelings, their tail wagging is biased to the left.”

2. He stays close to you



Your dog's choice to stay close to you illustrates his love for you. | iStock.com/cynoclub

Tail-wagging isn't the only clue your dog loves you. VetStreet reports that many dogs [lean against their owners](#). Some stand on your feet. They might stay close to you during a walk. And when they take a nap, they might want to cuddle as close to you as possible. The reason why? Your dog wants affection from you. “Dogs love to cuddle,” according to VetStreet. “And if the person you want to cuddle with is always sitting and standing, then cuddling takes the form of leaning on her or sitting on her shoes as she taps away at the keyboard.”

3. He makes eye contact



When your dog makes eye contact with you, he's telling you, "I love you." | iStock.com/erdinhasdemir

Does your dog stare into your eyes? It turns out that's one of the ways that he says, "I love you." According to Science Magazine, researchers have determined "[mutual gazing](#)" between dogs and their owners causes significant increases in oxytocin. Oxytocin in both humans and dogs is a [powerful hormone](#) that plays a significant role in bonding. Science Magazine reports, "The results suggest that human-dog interactions elicit the same type of oxytocin positive feedback loop as seen between mothers and their infants."

4. He responds to your voice



When your dog responds positively to your voice, he's showing he loves you. | Timothy A. Clary/Getty Images

Sure, your dog runs over when you tell him that dinner is served or it's time for a walk. But according to NPR, researchers have determined the [reward pathways in a dog's brain](#) light up when they hear praising words and approving intonations. Your dog is listening to what you're saying and how you're saying it. Dogs process speech by separating the meaning of the words from the intonation. And they analyze each aspect of speech independently. If your dog runs over to you when you call him or responds positively to the sound of your voice, that's a pretty good sign that he loves you.

5. He raises his left eyebrow when you walk into the room



Does your dog raise an eyebrow when you enter a room? That's probably a sign of his affection. | iStock.com/JackSpoon

You've probably realized if your dog wags his tail or turns his head when you walk into the room he's happy to see you. But researchers have discovered another interesting behavior. They [recorded dogs' facial expressions](#) with high-speed cameras and found dogs raise their left eyebrows when they see their owners. The dogs didn't raise their eyebrows to just any positive stimuli. For instance, they didn't raise their eyebrows when they saw an attractive toy. So the researchers concluded the eyebrow lift likely reflects "the dog's attachment to the owner."

6. He yawns after you do



If your dog yawns when you do, he's demonstrating he has empathy for you. | iStock.com/Katerina_Brusnika

Another surprising sign your dog loves you? He yawns after you do. Researchers found dogs [catch human yawns](#). They explained that so-called continuous (or contagious) yawning relates to the capacity for empathy. And they demonstrated that dogs yawn in response to human yawns. So if your dog seems to yawn in response to yours, he's likely demonstrating that he can read your emotional signals and empathize with you.

7. He prefers a belly rub to a treat



If your dog wants a belly rub instead of a treat, he definitely loves you. | iStock.com

Whether you're training a young dog or just expressing your love to an adult canine, you might wonder how to best reward your dog. According to Science Magazine, a study found dogs [respond more positively](#) to praise than to food. Many dogs even prefer a belly rub from their owners than a treat. Sure, some dogs react more strongly to food. But if your dog wants attention more than he wants a treat, that's a pretty good sign he values your attention. Science Magazine explains, "The study supports how important social interaction is to dogs — and provides a healthier alternative to treats, too."

8. He shows positive emotions toward you



You know your dog loves you if he displays positive emotions with you. | iStock.com/tom_kolossa

Neuroeconomics professor Gregory Berns wrote in The New York Times that after [using an MRI](#) to map dogs' brain activity, he came to a fascinating conclusion: "Dogs, and probably many other animals (especially our closest primate relatives), seem to have emotions just like us." Most of us don't have access to an MRI to check out our dog's brain activity. But if your dog seems happy to spend time with you or seems to grow attached to your kids, that might be a pretty good sign your dog loves you and your family.

9. He tries to engage with you



If your dog tries to engage with you, he's demonstrating his love for you. | iStock.com/humonia

Not sure whether your dog is actually happy to see you or just wants the food and attention you provide? Modern Dog reports five ways your dog [tries to engage with you](#). Does your dog greet you at the door? Perhaps he makes relaxed eye contact with you? Does he cuddle with you when he doesn't want something? Maybe he chooses to be in the same room as you, even if he's sleeping or playing on his own? Or does he take his toys over to you? All of these are signs your dog is trying to engage with you and thinks of you as far more than the provider of his food.

10. He bonds with you like a baby would



A puppy who loves you will bond with you like a baby would. | iStock.com/AVAVA

CBS News reports that according to scientists, the bond formed between your dog and you [might be quite similar](#) to the bond formed between a baby and parents. The bond comes about thanks to the “secure base effect.” The idea is infants use their parents as a safe “home base” when they interact with the world around them. If your dog gets distressed and looks for you in unfamiliar situations, he’s relying on you in the same way.

11. He chooses to spend time with you



If your dog is choosing to spend time with or near you, he definitely loves you. | iStock.com/ lolostock

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson writes in the book, *Dogs Never Lie About Love*, that “once a dog loves you, [he loves you always](#), no matter what you do, no matter what happens, no matter how much time goes by.” Humans and dogs can, on a basic level, understand each other’s emotional responses. And dogs like to spend time with humans, in Masson’s assessment, “because dogs love us.”

12. He tries to follow your rules



A dog that tries to follow your rules, even if he fails occasionally, loves you very much. | iStock.com/pyotr021

Clive L. Wynne, director of the Canine Science Collaboratory at Arizona State University, tells The New York Times that dogs “have this kind of open hyper-sociability. The dog itself [wants to give out love](#).” Dogs, like humans, seem to have multiple types of intelligence. Some show empathy. Others excel at communication. Yet others have great memory. And some show exceptional reasoning skills. You might want your dog to be smart. But the New York Times notes that smart dogs aren’t always fun to live with. So if your dog is eager to please you and tries to obey your rules, you know your dog loves you — even if he isn’t the smartest animal on the block.

13. He thinks of you as family



Your dog loves you if he thinks of you as family. | iStock.com/Ralphys

Mic reports that according to brain scans of dogs, our canine companions not only love us, but [think of us as family](#). When your dog smells your scent, the reward center of his brain, called the caudate nucleus, lights up. When you make happy sounds — whether you're speaking, laughing, or making other sounds — your dog's auditory cortex lights up. He's wired to pick up on your subtle mood changes.

14. He bonds with you



A dog's brain releases the love hormone, oxytocin. | iStock.com

Humans' brains release a hormone called oxytocin, frequently referred to as "the love hormone," during agreeable human reactions. Your brain releases oxytocin when you see someone you love, when you interact with a friend, or even when a stranger is kind to you. The hormone helps us bond with and care about others. And, interestingly enough, Claremont Graduate University researcher Paul Zak reports for *The Atlantic* that dogs' brains [release oxytocin, too](#). "That animals of different species induce oxytocin release in each other suggests that they, like us, may be capable of love," Zak says.

15. He's simply being a dog



Your dog is wired to love you just by being a dog. | iStock.com

According to *The New Yorker*, dogs “domesticated themselves. [They chose us.](#)” Dogs diverged from wolves when they chose to get close to humans — likely motivated by the free food and shelter. Humans keep them as pets not because they’re useful but because they make good companions. This is because they made an “ancestral bet” thousands of years ago to stop hunting and start befriending people for food. So from an evolutionary perspective, a domesticated dog wants to please you. By simply being a dog, your dog is telling you he loves you.