

THE LADDER OF AGGRESSION

Recognising when your dog is asking for space



Dogs rarely go from feeling comfortable to biting without showing other signs of discomfort first. The Ladder of Aggression illustrates some of the behaviours dogs may use as a situation becomes increasingly difficult for them. Learning to recognise the earlier, quieter signs gives us an opportunity to listen and respond before a dog feels the need to escalate.

**Higher risk
of aggression**



INCREASING NEED FOR SPACE

TOP TIPS

**Lower level
signs of discomfort**

	Biting	Makes contact with teeth, which can cause injury.
	Snapping	Shows teeth with no contact.
	Growling	Low rumbling sound.
	Standing stiffly or staring	Body tense, focused on the trigger.
	Crouching, creeping or lowering the body	Trying to make themselves smaller.
	Walking away	Moving away from the situation.
	Turning the body away or sitting down	Avoiding further interaction.
	Turning the head away	Looking away from the trigger.
	Yawning, blinking or nose licking	Signs of mild stress or discomfort.

Adapted from Kendal Shepherd's original "Ladder of Aggression"



ALWAYS REMEMBER DOGS DO NOT HAVE TO CLIMB EVERY RUNG



Dogs may skip behaviours, move quickly through the ladder, or show different signals in different situations.

Responding to the quieter signals can prevent a dog from needing to communicate more strongly.



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought *early*. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



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