



How do ma'iinganag communicate?

By studying ma'iinganag (wolves) for many years, researchers have learned a lot about how they communicate with each other. Wolves can use vocalizations, or sounds, to communicate feelings or situations, but they also position their body parts in ways that provide information to other wolves.

Vocalization

In a way, wolves have their own language. They use specific vocalizations in different situations to communicate with other wolves, and with other species, like humans—for example, when they bark at humans approaching their den of pups. This “language” is made of sounds rather than words—mostly howling and growling. Wolves use three common types of howls: chorus howls, lone howls, and bark howls.

Chorus howls take place when multiple wolves in a pack howl together. This kind of howling is used for socializing with other wolves and also for locating distant pack members. Wolves also use chorus howls to ask for the location of a pack member. Another purpose for chorus howling is that it can keep away other wolf packs from the territory. The wolves in a pack can change their pitches while chorus howling. It can make their pack seem larger and convince neighboring packs that there are too many wolves to compete with for more territory. (It’s like a warning). And sometimes, it seems to be just for fun.

Lone howls refer to a single wolf howling alone. They are used to find other wolves or packs in the area for several reasons—for instance, finding a mate or locating the pack if a wolf becomes separated.



Ma'iinganag use different sounds to communicate with each other.

Finally, **bark howls** are described as alternating between howls and barks, and they are typically used when a wolf is feeling threatened. The bark howl is a type of “final warning” to whatever is threatening the wolf. Wolves can use growling for a similar purpose—either to threaten, or to give a warning to whatever threatens them. Growling can be used to tell another wolf not to do something. Growling and other vocal cues are used during dominance-play behavior or when a wolf is claiming food.
(see Ma'iingan, page 22)



Ear placement also has meaning for wolves. Researchers have studied ear positions enough to get a basic idea of a canine’s mood or intentions by looking at the ears. The ears forward wolf is alert and serious.



A tail held high is a good indicator of confidence—it is typical in a dominant male or female, and observed in lower-ranking members occasionally.

Search-A-Word

L	U	F	‘	L	C	L	H	B
F	O	Y	L	H	K	W	L	A
E	C	N	O	O	E	O	Y	R
X	V	R	E	H	W	R	U	K
W	U	K	C	O	I	G	I	X
S	T	A	I	L	P	A	C	K
Z	C	Q	G	L	Y	B	R	O
L	A	O	L	L	W	O	H	P
N	A	G	N	I	I	‘	A	M
bark	cache	chorus	growl					
howl	lone	ma'iingan	pack					
tail	wolf							

Message	Head	Tail	Other
“I want to play”	Ears forward play grin	Up and wagging	“Play Bow”
“You are my leader; you are my superior”	Head lowered ears back tense grin eyes averted	Down—often tucked between hind legs	Fur is flat to make itself look smaller
“I am the leader”	Head high ears forward mouth relaxed direct stare	Held high	Fur fluffed, animal is relaxed
“Don’t hurt me; I don’t want to fight.”	Head down ears back mouth closed eyes averted	Low—often tucked	Animal rolls on back and shows his belly