



Cat behaviour: Understand Your Cat's Body Language & Emotion



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Cats make one of the best family pets. But before you bring a feline furry friend home, make sure that you have a fair understanding of their body language and behaviour as this will help in better communication with your fur baby when they become a part of your family. It would become much easier for you as well as the cat to adjust to the new settings and to each other.

Unlike what many people believe, that cats are not as expressive or loving as dogs, feline furries have their own unique way of communicating. For example, did you know that cats

only meow to humans? So, when your fur kiddo is meowing to you or around you, it is essentially 'talking' to you. All you have to do is understand your furry.

Let us take a look at some of the important aspects that will help you in understanding your cat well.

Cat behaviour

Understanding cat behaviour will let you know what your four-legged friend wants to convey to you. While cats have uber-cute ways of expressing themselves, sometimes, their behaviours are truly odd and weird.

When your cat licks you, exposes its belly to you, purrs, and kneads with its paws, you'll feel all 'awwwwww', with a strong urge to cuddle it and pamper it.

The expression quickly changes to 'oh no!' when it knocks things over, scratches furniture, pees and poos outside the litter box, brings dead animals or toys from outside, or starts chirping.

Another common behaviour is furries rubbing against a surface or you, which indicates territory marking.

You might also have noticed your kitty eating grass! Wondering why they look for grass after gobbling up all the yummy kibble you gave them. Well, it might be for soothing their tummy as it helps with hairballs and with gastrointestinal problems.

Cat sign language

Cat emotions are simpler to decipher as opposed to their behaviours, provided you know their body language. Cats use unique combinations of body language, scent cues, and vocalizations to communicate. Here are some cat sign languages, which will teach how to understand your cat:

- **Sounds:**

Purring, meowing, growling, and hissing, are an integral part of the feline repertoire. Each of these vocal sounds has a special meaning. While purring and meowing are friendly sounds, growling and hissing are warnings to stay away.

- **Eyes:**

Eyes play an important role in cat communication. When the eyes enlarge suddenly it is an indication of strong emotion. When eyes are wide open, a cat trusts you; narrowing of eyes indicates aggression or fear. Sleepy-looking, droopy eyelids mean that the furry friend is relaxed.

- **Ears:**

Cats communicate with their ears too. Forward-facing ears mean your feline friend is interested. Swivelling the ears backwards or sideways shows distress or the cat's

arousal. If your cat feels threatened, you can see backward ears.

- **Fur:**

How to understand your cat with its fur? When a cat is healthy as well as calm, the fur will look normal. If the fur is matted, it indicates that the cat is unwell. If the coat becomes fluffed suddenly or the tail has a 'bottle brush' appearance, it indicates aggression or fear.

- **Scent and smell:**

Humans cannot always decipher the scent cues of cats. However, cats employ various scent tools for other cats in the form of faeces and urine marking, clawing and body rubbing. Cats are extremely territorial and even kittens understand such scent cues.

- **Tail:**

The tail movement can have different meanings too. When a cat wants to be loved, it holds up its tail. A thumping or flailing tail is a sign to maintain distance. If there is bristling on the tail fur, it means defensiveness. If the tail is high and bristled, the cat is ready for a fight. Lastly, when the cat is fearful the tail is tucked between the legs.

Cat emotions

You will be surprised to know that cats have strong emotions and they do not shy away from showing them. Lots of research is being done on cat emotions lately and hopefully, we will have more information on the mysteries of the felines and how to understand your cat in the coming years. But you can be sure that your fur baby not only has immense love for you, but also feels happiness, fear, depression, anxiety, and relief. Cats have a strong emotional response to pain too.

It is interesting to note that cats have high-level cognitive abilities. This trait is prevalent in domestic cats where they can recognise the emotions of strangers as well as of their owners. When owners show positive behaviour, feline friends love spending time with them by purring and rubbing against their bodies. Whereas when their humans are angry or annoyed, fur babies will show their stress with backwards ears and hiding.

Cat body language

Understanding cat body language is an interesting area of study. Cat communication takes place through its whole body, ears, eyes, voice, tail, fur, and so on. For understanding your cat, you just need to closely watch what it wants to convey.

Licking, purring, meowing softly, kneading, and lying on the back with the belly exposed are clear indications that your feline friend trusts you, wants your attention and loves you. It also indicates that the cat is happy and considers you as a part of the family. If your furry friend has an arched back with its tail held high and is head-butting you, understand it wants cuddles and loads of love! A curled-up cat means that your pawed friend feels safe

and relaxed as it is their favourite sleeping position. On the other hand, hissing, furs raised on end, and growling are clear indications of fear and aggression.

FAQ on understanding your cat

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1. Q:

How do I know if my cat is allergic to its food?

A:

Food allergy in cats is a common occurrence caused by an allergic reaction to certain food proteins. Cats suffering from common cat food allergies can show signs such as itchiness, skin inflammations, and stomach disorders like diarrhoea and vomiting.

2. Q:

Do cats sense the emotion in humans?

A:

Cats are pretty sensitive to humans and can read specific emotional signals in their humans. However, the sensitivity of a cat is lesser than that of a dog. Even on understanding human emotions, cats show subtle and slight changes in behaviour.

3. Q:

Do cats recognise their owner's voice?

A:

Yes, after lots of research, it has been deciphered that cats can recognise their owner's voice. They can distinguish it from the voice of a stranger. This is why your kitty comes running to you when you call its name.

4. Q:

How can I understand my cat?

A:

Understanding your cat is easy. Take close note of its behaviour and body language. Notice its eyes, ears, furs, its calls and meows, and its tail. You will have a clear idea of what your cat is trying to convey.

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Like most cat-owners, you probably see your feline friend as a member of your family. So, when she finally passes away, you'll experience a very real sense of grief. Allow yourself to feel this pain, which is absolutely normal, but also remember that time is a great healer. Letting yourself say goodbye to your cat is being put to sleep by your vet, you will probably be able to stay with her throughout the procedure. For some people, it's important to be able to say goodbye to their pet in this way. But even if you can't be in the room, you'll be able to spend some time with her first, and say your final goodbyes afterwards. Allowing yourself to grieve After your cat has passed away, you'll probably feel a variety of emotions. These might include shock, disbelief, pain, anger, guilt, depression and anxiety. Don't suppress any of these feelings - they're quite natural. Going through this grieving process will help you to come to terms with the death. In time, previously painful memories will remind you of your cat in a positive light, and you'll find yourself smiling instead of crying. Help and support Everyone grieves differently. You might prefer to grieve alone, perhaps writing down your feelings and thoughts in a diary, or in poetry. You might look to your family and friends for support. Or you might feel more comfortable talking to strangers, in which case your vet will be able to tell you about local support groups. Most important of all, never feel embarrassed about grieving over "just a cat" - the emotions you're feeling are real, and you need to deal with them in whatever way suits you best. Helping your children deal with death Most children under the age of five don't understand the concept of death. They may understand that death isn't very nice, but they won't really understand that your cat won't be coming back. Even so, they may be deeply distressed by the fact that their furry friend just isn't around any more. So make sure you give them lots of love and support. Between the ages of five and nine, children become aware that death is final. They may even believe in an afterlife. Let them talk about what's happened, and never dismiss your children as being "too young to understand". Older children will fully understand the concepts of death and grief. So they'll experience the same range of emotions as adults following the death of your cat. Grieving children can occasionally develop behaviour problems, such as

becoming clingy, wetting the bed, having nightmares or being unable to concentrate in school. You can help by talking to your children about how they feel, and by being honest about what's happened. If it's necessary to have your cat put to sleep, include them in that decision-making process, so that their feelings are acknowledged early on. And while as an adult you're probably more comfortable with the phrase "putting to sleep", make sure you tell your children that your cat is going to die. While it may seem harsh, it's more important that they understand exactly what's going on. Cat memorials You may not have considered what you want to do with your pet's body. It's a good idea to talk this through with your family and vet while she's still alive. There are four basic options - your vet will be able to advise you on all of them: Burial at home Burial in a pet cemetery Individual cremation - your pet's ashes are returned to you Communal cremation Your decision might be guided by all sorts of things - emotional, financial and practical. If you choose burial at home, contact your local council first to find out about any guidelines you should follow. And whatever you decide, make sure that everyone who was close to your cat is comfortable with the plan.

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