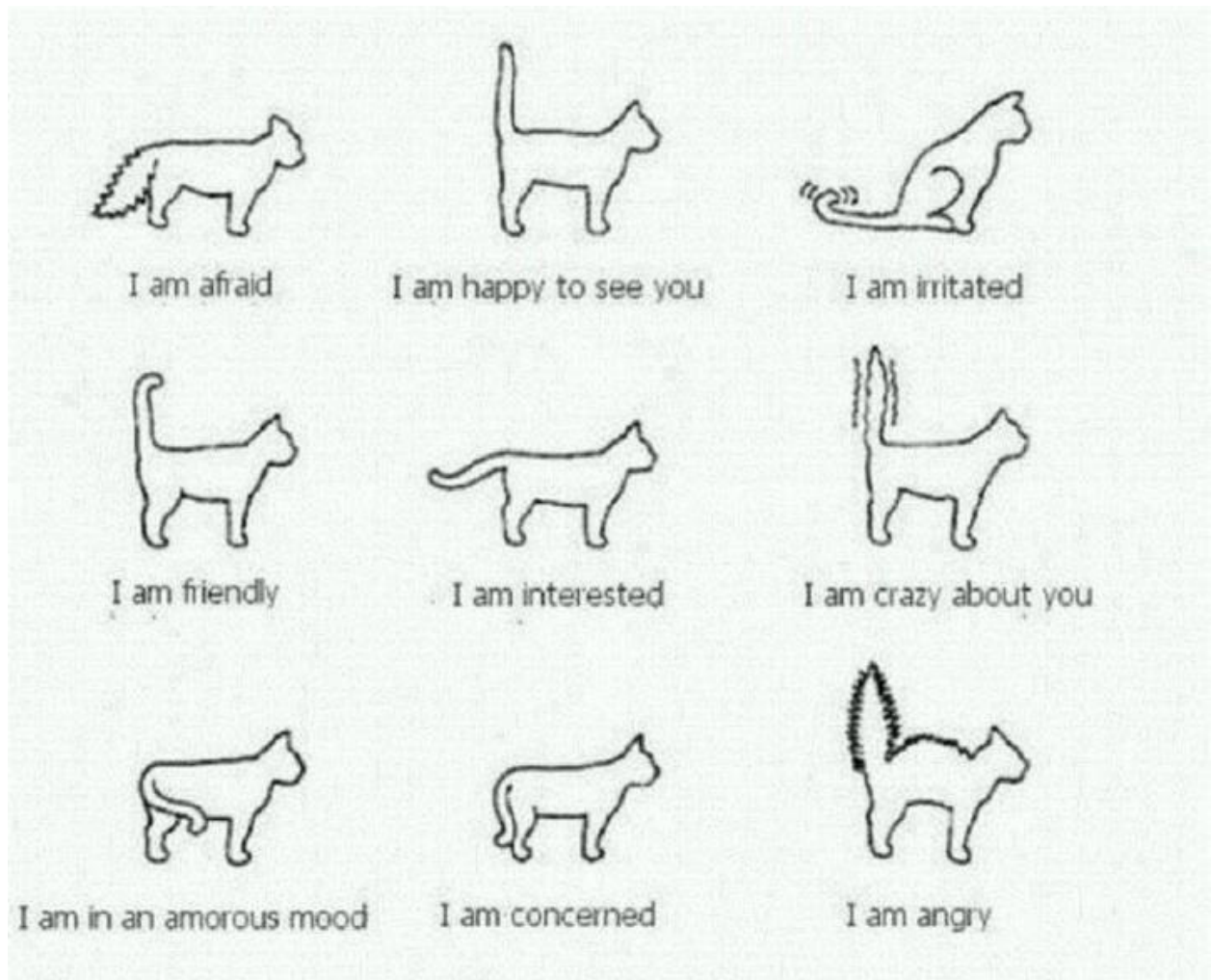


Interaction with your Cat

Body Language

A cat's posture basically boils down to two possibilities: either she's indicating that it's fine to come on over or she's warning you (or another cat) to stay away. The attitude can change very quickly, so be alert.



- Friendly/Relaxed: tail upright or relaxed, ears pricked slightly forward, purring, hair smooth and flat, touching with nose or head butting
- Frightened: hair up on back and tail, tail lashing or held close to the body, crouching sideways, hissing, growling or spitting, ears pulled flat against the head
- Aggressive: direct stare, hair raised on shoulders and tail, facing front, butt in the air, tail swishes or thumps the ground, lips curled in a snarl, hissing or screeching, ears flat and rotated backwards
- Annoyed: tip of tail twitches, ears flat against the head

Sick: eyes half closed, tail between the legs, loud purring when stroked



Misleading body postures:

Lying down, belly exposed: A cat which exposes her stomach is relaxed, but she is not necessarily “asking” for a belly rub – don’t be fooled, even if she rolls over to expose more of her stomach. Showing her belly is a sign that a cat feels secure enough to put herself in the ultimate vulnerable position, but it is not always an invitation to touch. Sometimes, rubbing a cat’s stomach can even trigger an automatic aggressive reflex, which can involve pushing you away with her feet and biting.

Sitting with a closely wrapped tail: Any resting position in which the cat has all her body parts tucked in (tail and/or paws) sends the message “Give me my space”. The cat would prefer not to be approached or disturbed.

Weaving through your legs: people misinterpret their cats attempt to make an emotional connection as being a plea for food – and eventually the cat herself is “trained” by her person’s response to expect food when she rubs against his legs.

Offering her bottom: your cat may come to you and turn around, her tail raised, as if offering you her behind – which is exactly what she is doing. You can take it as a sign of closeness and perhaps a sign that you remind her of her moth cat. It is a compliment and sign of connectedness and if you give your cat a scratch at the base of the tail, it will be a nice gesture in return.

Kneading: when your cat is resting on your lap and massages your legs with her paws, it’s called kneading (also referred to as “milk treading”). This is a sure sign that your cat is really content. If cats get carried away with kneading, it can get tiresome, especially if she also digs her claws in. But resist the temptation to push her off or chastise her in any way, which could confuse her and damage the bond between you two. Kneading is a powerful expression of trust and affection and should be treated and accepted as such.

Drooling: some cats drool while they purr, signaling their contentment when you are stroking them. It means it is so pleasurable that the cat has forgotten to swallow. You can relieve some of the drooling by touching your cat’s nose or the side of her mouth with your fingertip, which will remind her to swallow that saliva.

Fellow feline etiquette

- Cats do not like being stared at
- Looking away is actually good cat etiquette
- Cats are most at ease if they are not approached
- When the cat does come over, ignore her, let her sniff you out

- Avoid loud voices, quick movements and big gestures
- Stick out a finger for her to sniff

Rules when children and cats are in the house

- Explain cat body language to your child
- All playtime should be on the floor
- Teach your child how to touch a cat
- Teach your child where to touch a cat (and where not!)
- Touch with one hand only
- Children should not lift a cat
- Do not hold a cat who wants to leave
- Teach your child to stay away from the litter box, cat bowls



Playtime

Kittens need to learn how to play. The age when a kitten develops her most important play skills is eleven weeks – this is when playfulness amongst kitten is at its highest level. So if your adult cat does not respond to toys she probably was not exposed to games as a youngster.

Take it easy on kittens when playing. It can take as little as 5 minutes for a kitten to be satisfied with playing, and then she might crash. Never wake a kitten up to play – she needs her rest. And don't play with her to the point of collapse – 5 minutes of fun, then naptime.

Don't let a kitten bite your fingers or toes. What may seem funny at first can become a downright pain if you allow your cat to chew on your digits.

Cats prefer to play in dim light, so turn the lights low and see if she responds more enthusiastically.

Cats get bored by the same old thing. Anything that is around all the time and readily accessible loses interest. Variety and the element of surprise are big motivators for cats, so leave out just a few toys at a time and rotate them to keep it interesting. Keep all other toys stacked away. The smart cat will know that it is playtime, when you go to the particular drawer.

Cats follow movement. Some cats learn quickly playing fetch. Try small rubber balls that bounce and are comfortable for the cat to take into her mouth. Encourage the return of the toy with a treat.

Cats like to stalk a particularly hidden object. They like to be able to hide, spring out and attack, and then retreat to hide and start all over again. The watch/wait/pounce game is endlessly entertaining to most cats.

Another game is “bait” under the covers. Use a stick or toy on a rod that you move around under your bedcovers. The cat will follow the movement fascinated and keep pouncing on it. Don’t use your fingers or feet. Cats will use their claws in this game!

Cats love Starbucks and IKEA! Their solid paper bags are perfect hiding places and they love to stalk the “mouse” that tries to find cover inside and gives itself away with little scratching.

Cardboard boxes are another cheap and easy toy place. Fill it with crumbled wrapping paper and your cat will spend hours, fascinated by the noise of the paper and the imaginary mice hidden in there.

Cats will chase a reflection of a Flashlight or Laser Pointer wherever you send it. Regardless of being run along the flat floor or swished up the wall, a cat will spend great enthusiasm to catch the light.

If you have the time and space, a second cat is the best play toy you could ever give your cat. The two can run, hide and wrestle with each other.

To keep it interesting and stimulating for your cat, let your cat decide how long you’ll play, offer 2 play sessions a day, minimum. A play session with your cat needs to be only 5 – 10 minutes, ideally one in the morning and one in the evening.

Some of the best toys are free:

- Empty cardboard box
- Empty paper bags
- Cardboard toilet paper and paper towel tubes
- Drinking straws
- Empty plastic film containers
- Plastic tops from water or soda bottles
- Wine corks
- Nut in the shell
- Seashells
- Ping-Pong balls
- Feathers from large birds
- Pipe cleaner
- Balled up paper from a glossy magazine
- Cotton swaps



