


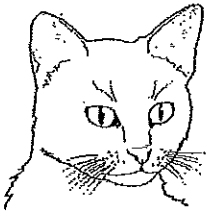
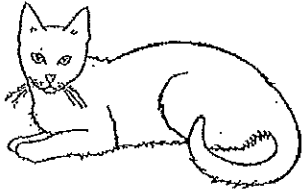

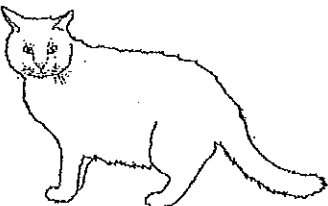

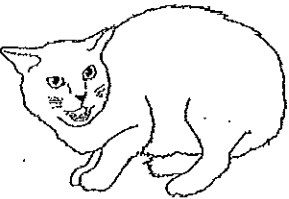

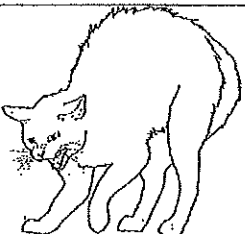

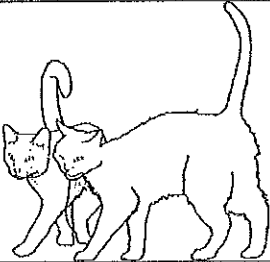
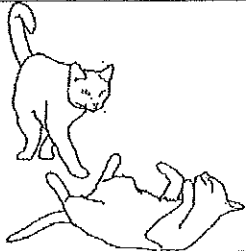
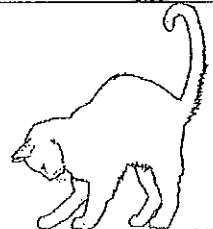
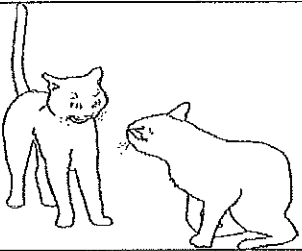
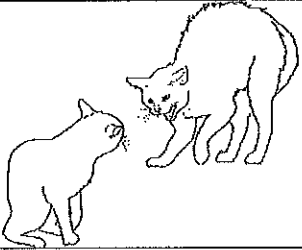
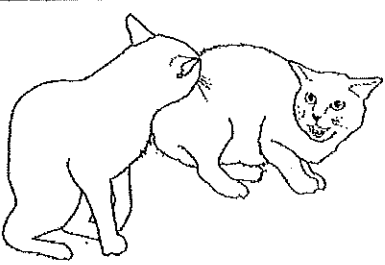


## Reading your cat's "body language"

Cats use different body postures to communicate their emotions. Below are some typical postures you may observe in your cat. When observing your cat, try to get an idea of its usual attitude when alone and in contact with other animals, including people. As cats become more anxious about their surroundings, they will try to avoid contact with threats. Their score may change very quickly depending on the seriousness of the threat. The highest scores usually are seen only when escape is not possible.

Score	Body Postures	Head Postures	
<b>1</b> Relaxed	<p>Activity – sleeping or resting, alert or active, may be playing</p> <p>Body – lying on side, on belly or sitting; if standing or moving, back horizontal</p> <p>Breathing – slow to normal</p> <p>Legs – bent, hind legs may be laid out; when standing extended</p> <p>Tail – extended or loosely wrapped; up or loosely down when standing</p>	 <p>Head – laid on surface or over body, some movement</p> <p>Eyes – closed to open, pupils slit to normal size</p> <p>Ears – normal to forward</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward</p> <p>Sounds – none, purr</p>	
<b>2</b> Alert	<p>Activity – resting, awake or actively exploring</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back is horizontal</p> <p>Breathing – normal</p> <p>Legs – bent; when standing extended</p> <p>Tail – on body or curved back; up or tense downwards when standing; may be twitching</p>	 <p>Head – over the body, some movement</p> <p>Eyes – open normally, pupils normal</p> <p>Ears – normal or erected to front or back</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward</p> <p>Sounds – none or meow</p>	
<b>3</b> Tense	<p>Activity – resting or alert, may be actively exploring, trying to escape</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back of the body is lower than the front ("slinking")</p> <p>Breathing – normal</p> <p>Legs – bent, hind legs bent and front legs extended when standing</p> <p>Tail – close to body; tense downwards or curled forward, may be twitching when standing.</p>	 <p>Head – over the body or pressed to body, little or no movement</p> <p>Eyes – wide open or pressed together, pupils normal to partially dilated</p> <p>Ears – erected to front or back</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward</p> <p>Sounds – none, meow, or plaintive meow</p>	
<b>4</b> Anxious	<p>Activity – alert, may be actively trying to escape</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back of the body is lower than the front</p> <p>Breathing – normal or fast</p> <p>Legs – under body, bent when standing</p> <p>Tail – close to the body; may be curled forward close to body when standing. The tip may move up and down or side to side.</p>	 <p>Head – on the plane of the body, little or no movement</p> <p>Eyes – wide open, pupils dilated</p> <p>Ears – partially flattened</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward or back</p> <p>Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling</p>	
<b>5</b> Fearful	<p>Activity – motionless, alert or crawling</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or crouched directly on top of all paws, may be shaking; if standing the whole body is near to the ground, may be shaking</p> <p>Breathing – fast</p> <p>Legs – bent; when standing bent near to surface</p> <p>Tail – close to the body; curled forward close to the body when standing.</p>	 <p>Head – near to surface motionless</p> <p>Eyes – fully open, pupils fully dilated</p> <p>Ears – fully flattened</p> <p>Whiskers – back</p> <p>Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling</p>	
<b>6</b> Terrified	<p>Activity – motionless alert</p> <p>Body – crouched directly on top of all paws, shaking. Hair on back and tail bushy.</p> <p>Breathing – fast</p> <p>Legs – stiff or bent to increase apparent size</p> <p>Tail – close to body</p>	 <p>Head – lower than the body</p> <p>Eyes – fully opened, pupils fully dilated</p> <p>Ears – fully flattened, back on head</p> <p>Whiskers – back</p> <p>Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling, hissing</p>	

Cat's postures also try to communicate their emotions about other animals to them. These postures often are either friendly or conflict-related, depending on the situation at the time you observe them. Conflict related behaviors are often more subtle than those shown here, and only noticed when one learns what to look for. For example, you also might observe one cat appearing tense or anxious when another (more dominant) cat blocks access to food, litter boxes, or other resources in the home. Cat behavior can be quite complex; entire books on the subject are available. These descriptions of the basic postures are only provided as an introduction to your cat's emotions.

<b>Friendly postures</b>	
	<p>When cats approach in a friendly way they often hold their tail straight up, whiskers forward, and rub their chins or heads against other cats or people. Cats do this when greeting, or when confidently investigating something new.</p>
	<p>When cats want to play they may roll over and expose their bellies.  (Females also may display this behavior during mating.)</p>
	<p>Cats also may arch their tails over the back or may move it fast when they are happy and want to play. Their pupils may be dilated (large) and ears forward. Cats with rapidly moving tails can be quite aroused, however, and it may not be a good idea to play with them as they may become aggressive and bite or scratch.</p>
<b>Conflict-related postures</b>	
	<p>When a cat (left cat) is about to attack, the body is held in a straight-forward position, pupils are narrow, the tail may be moving rapidly from side to side, ears are back, and whiskers are forward.</p>
	<p>When a cat is defending itself from another cat (right cat) it will lean backwards with an arched back. It may move the tail very fast, arch it over the back, or put it between the back legs. The ears are flat, pupils dilated (large), and the hairs may be erect. Cats do this to appear as large and threatening as possible.</p>
	<p>When the threat is near, the belly and legs of the defensive cat (right cat) may touch the floor. The ears and whiskers will be back and flat against the head and the teeth may be exposed. Unlike dogs, cats only expose their bellies to show submission to try to stop an attack when no escape is possible, or when the cat is at the back of a cage or under furniture and wants to be able to slash with all four paws at any hand coming toward them.</p>

Adapted from Kessler MR, Turner DC. Stress and adaptation of cats (*Felis silvestris catus*) housed singly, in pairs and in groups in boarding catteries. *Animal Welfare* 1997;6:243-254, Beaver BV. *Feline Behavior: A guide for veterinarians*. St. Louis: Elsevier Science, 2003:349, and UFAW Animal Welfare Research Report No. 8; An ethogram for behavioural studies of domestic cats, 1995.