

Introductions to Family

Living with a cat offers companionship for children and can start a lifelong compassion for animals. In children, cats have a built-in playmate. In order to keep both your child and pet safe, it's important to set ground rules and teach your child how to live with the new cat in a way that will build a lasting, happy relationship.



Get the Kids Involved.

Begin by involving your children in the decision making process. Allow them to pick out toys, set up supplies, and help with naming your new family member. You can go to a bookstore or library to pick out books on caring for your new cat!

Respect.

As you get to know your cat's behavior, it's important to teach cat language to your children. Help them understand when your cat wants to be pet or play and when they want to be left alone. Teach children to sit low and allow the cat to approach and sniff them on their own before petting. Make sure your cat has somewhere they can escape when they need a break or it becomes too loud. Remind children that they should never, poke, grab, pull, or yell at the kitty.

Care.

Begin by letting your child help set up their new friend's room and sit quietly with them at first to make them comfortable. Explain that bringing home a cat is like the first day at school for them and they may be nervous. Let your child help care for your cat by giving them age-appropriate tasks that will allow the two to form a bond.

Play.

Have your child watch you play and speak gently to your cat so they know the best way to interact, then have them do it as you supervise. Let children know that kitties don't like objects dangled in their face but do like to chase toys around the room. Some kitties don't mind going for a ride in a baby stroller but make sure your child knows how to tell when kitty doesn't want to play.

Safety.

Showing your child how to handle the family cat will keep them both safe. Explain that cats don't feel safe when "big people" suddenly pick them up. If age-appropriate, show them the proper way to pick up and hold your cat with their arm under the cat's bottom. Explain that this should only be done when you are there to supervise. Lastly, a cat is more apt to bite or scratch when it feels threatened so be sure your child knows when to approach and when to leave kitty alone (such as when they are eating, sleeping, or hiding).

A happy cat

These cats are relaxed and happy.

1



Cat is standing, has a relaxed body posture, ears are in a natural position, tail is held upright with the tip of the tail curved, eyes are a normal shape, mouth is closed.

2



Cat is lying down, belly is exposed, body posture is relaxed, body is stretched out, ears are in natural position, eyes may be partly closed, mouth is closed.

3



Cat is sitting, body posture is relaxed, tail is held out loosely from body, ears are in natural position, eyes are a normal shape, mouth is closed.

A worried cat

These cats are telling you that they are uncomfortable and don't want you near them.

1



Cat is in a crouched position, muscles are tense, body is held tightly, tail is tucked tightly into body, ears are slightly swivelled sideways, head is slightly lowered and tucked into body, pupils are dilated, mild tension shows in face.

2



Cats who are worried or anxious may hide.

An angry or very unhappy cat

These cats are not happy and want you to stay away or go away.

1



Cat is lying down, body is flattened, ears are flattened to the head, pupils are dilated, tail is held tightly into body, body is tense, limbs are held tight and close to body.

2



Cat is lying down, body is flattened, ears are flattened to the head and drawn back, body is slightly rolled over to one side, pupils are dilated, mouth is open and tense, teeth are showing.

3



Cat is standing, back is arched, body is held sideways, hair is raised, posture is tense, front paw is slightly lifted off the ground (ready to swipe if needed), ears are lowered and pointing out to the side, mouth is open and tense, teeth are showing, tail is tense.

CAT LANGUAGE



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



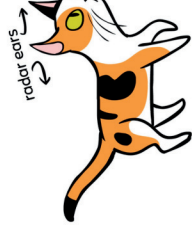
TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



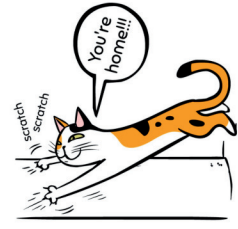
CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



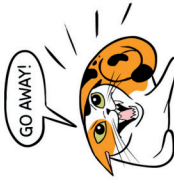
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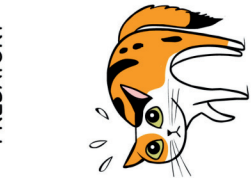
WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED