

SOUTH COAST VET CARE

Talking Animals ~ Reading Your Cats Body Signals

Even when cats are silent, they're always giving off signals of their current mood. Is your cat feeling playful, and wanting to be approached? Fearful? Relaxed? This guide will help you identify signals in your cat's body language and facial cues in order to better understand their needs. Understanding how your cat's non-verbal communication differs from that of people and dogs is a simple step you can take toward strengthening your bond. These illustrations provide a guide, but it's always good to consider the environment and context of the situation to help you read your cat's signals more accurately.

Relaxed

How can you tell if your cat is relaxed? Your answer lies in a combination of cues. Make sure you look closely at her facial expression and body language, as this position can look similar to fear.



Ears

A relaxed cat's ears will point up and slightly forward.



Whiskers

Look for whiskers that are fanned and slightly pointed sideways or forward.



Tail

Her tail will be visible, not tucked underneath her body (if laying down.)



Posture

Her head may be up while she lays prone and stretched out.

Friendly

Aside from looking at his body language, you can also listen to a cat for signs of friendliness. If you hear meowing, he may be looking to interact. Keep in mind that how you interact

should be based on the personality of the cat and the context of the situation.



Eyes

A friendly cat's eyes will be alert and blinking.



Ears

Look for ears that are pointed forward.



Whiskers

Fanned out whiskers are a sign of friendliness.



Tail

Tail will be erect and pointing upward, the tip of the tail may be bent and/or forward.



Posture

Look for a head that's held up, not leaning down or ducked.

Fearful

Look for these cues for indications of fear in your cat. You may have to look closely because while their posture may appear calm, a closer look at their face and tail shows distress. Try to minimize sudden or rapid movements as they may amplify the cat's fearfulness.



Eyes

Look for dilated pupils.



Ears

They will be somewhat flattened and/or out toward the sides and more as fear increases.



Whiskers

Whiskers will be flattened, clumped, pointed down, pressed onto his face, when fearful.



Tail

A tail closely wrapped or tucked under the body signifies fear.



Posture

Her head may be up while she lays prone and stretched out.

Playful

When cats are standing with their tails curled, rolling side-to-side or belly up, they're likely looking for contact and play. Just make sure not to touch them on their stomachs, as you would a dog, because this will elicit reflexive, defensive or predatory behaviors that make them claw or bite your hand.



Ears

Look for ears that are pointed forward.



Tail

A standing tail, or U-shaped tail with a curled tip, means a cat is looking to play.



Posture

If a cat is rolling around with his belly up, he's showing he is harmless and probably desires fun, friendly interaction

Negative

When a cat is showing negative body language, she is most likely not open to contact. It's probably best not to try to approach or pick her up, especially if the cat is hissing or growling.



Eyes

Look for dilated pupils.



Ears

Watch out for ears that are flattened or back, which are a message to stay away.



Tail

Combined with other signals, an erect tail with raised hair is a sign of negative attitude.



Posture

An arched back with raised hair means stay away.

A Look at the Tail

You can learn a lot from a cat's tail - if you know how to read it right. However, you should always make sure not to rely only on the tail position, but also consider it in the context of other signs of body language.



FRIENDLY



RELAXED



SUBMISSIVE



DEFENSIVE



FEARFUL



AGITATED



ANGRY