



Caring Hands Humane Society

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COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CAT

Just like people, animals are also individuals! If you expect every cat to act just like fluffy you will be sadly disappointed. But then it would be quite boring if all cats acted alike. Each cat's unique personality is what makes having more than one so pleasurable.

There is no reason why young children and cats cannot be the best of friends, as long as your kids understand some simple facts about cat behavior.

- Cats do not like to be hugged tightly
- Cats do not like to be chased around the house
- Cats are sensitive to loud noises and sudden movement

Since cats can not speak English, Spanish, or any other language we humans use to communicate we must learn to understand their body language. We will never be able to fully understand all of the body gestures a cat makes, but over the years we have come to understand a few. With a cat some gestures can mean many different things so your interpretation should always be made in the context of the given situation.

- **Arching Back** – A fearful or defensive move used to intimidate others. When the cat feels superior, just the hair along the spine will stand up. If he feels less superior, his entire coat will fluff out making him look more intimidating.
- **Irritation** – Flattened ears, stiff twitching tail, tense or flattened body, long drawn out loud meow, hissing – these signs should signal you to stop whatever you are doing and walk away.
- **Eyes wide open** – and dilated pupils indicate fear.
- **Rubbing** – Rubbing against everything including you is your cats way of saying to other cats “I own this.” Cats have scent glands in their forehead, around their mouth and under their chin. When they rub against something they deposit their unique scent as a way of communicating with other animals. As you are aware it is also her way of showing affection and asking for some cuddle time.
- **Whiskers** – close to the face and together would indicate shy, timid or a defensive move. Fully extended to the side but not spread out to far, is a content and relaxed position. Fanned out really far and extended away from the face would indicate she is excited about something and may even be getting ready to attach.

- **Biting** – during petting is difficult to understand. All cats will only tolerate petting for so long. For some that might be an hour, while others it might only be two strokes then she bites to let you know that is enough. If you pay close attention to your pet, you will usually notice other signs happening before the bite; such as the whiskers closing up, the ears flattening or maybe her body becomes tense. These precluding signals can happen fast, then suddenly the bite.

By no means is this list all inclusive of all cats' gestures and is only intended to be used as a guide to understanding your cat.

CHHS Staff