

# CAT BODY LANGUAGE

# SIGNS OF A HAPPY CAT

## FRIENDLY



- Ears are up and pointing forward
- Tail is up and curling at the tip
- Eye contact

## RELAXED



- Body and limbs are stretched out and loose
- Tail laid down, the tip may be gently moving
- Eye contact, slightly closed

## SLOW BLINKS I LOVE YOU



- Ears are up and pointing forward
- Tail laid down, the tip may be gently moving
- Eye contact with eyes closing slowly to show trust

## ENGAGED



- Ears are up and pointing forward
- Eyes wide open and watching intently

## TRUSTING/PLAYFUL



## NOT AN INVITATION TO TOUCH BELLY (BUT SOMETIMES!)

- Body and limbs are stretched out and loose, belly exposed
- Eye contact, slightly closed

## COMFORTABLE



- Body, head and limbs are stretched out and soft
  - Eye slightly closed
  - Precursor to a nap
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## GREETING I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOU



- Better known as "big stretch"
  - Similar to the yoga pose downward dog, often after a nap
  - Tail up, front paws outstretched, toes spread, may scratch floor with claws
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## LET'S PLAY



## SCENT MARKING THIS IS MINE NOW



- Ears are up and pointing forward
  - Tail up and may curl around the object of interest
  - May involve slow blinks
  - Rubbing muzzle, cheek and shoulder against surfaces, objects, people or other animals
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## CURIOS



- Tail pointing towards ground, tip curled up, may be twitching a bit
  - Eyes wide and alert
  - Ears up and forward facing
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- Eyes wide and alert, pupils dilated
- Tail up, front paws up and may scratch with claws on a scratching post
- May be followed by zoomies and other play behaviors

## FOCUSED / STALKING



- Body, head and tail low to the ground to be as inconspicuous as possible
- Tail down, twitching
- Eyes wide, pupils dilated
- Ears forward
- May include shimmying of the back end as they prepare to strike prey/toy

## CONFIDENT / WELCOMING



- Tail up
- Eyes contact
- Ears forward

## FLEHMEN RESPONSE SMELLING SOMETHING MORE DEEPLY



- After sniffing something unfamiliar
- Mouth hangs open exposing lower teeth, may look disgusted

## VIBRATING TAIL EXCITED / OVERSTIMULATED



- Tail up and vibrating
- Posture upright
- May be done in happy anticipation or due to too much sensory input

## KNEADING CONTENT OR SELF-SOOTHING



- Head down, focused on whatever they are kneading on
- Toes spread, paws marching in place, often on a soft surface like a blanket
- Mimics what kittens do to stimulate milk flow from mom
- They may do this when feeling relaxed or if they are feeling unwell to comfort themselves, depends on context

# CATS REACTING TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT

## ALERT / TENSE



- Head up
- Eyes wide
- Ears pointing back
- Also sometimes called "airplane ears"
- Response may be to sound, smell, movement being detected, or other annoyance

## EMBARRASSED



- Can be in response to being observed having the zoomies, having a failed leap, being caught doing something they shouldn't or having their human laugh at them
- Quickly turn and lick their shoulder as if to brush it off as though you didn't see what they just did

## ANNOYED



- Eyes narrowed
- Facing away from the source of annoyance
- Tail slapping the ground hard repeatedly

## UNCERTAIN / CAUTIOUS



- Eyes forward
- Ears slightly back
- Tail parallel to ground
- May lift front paw, while treading carefully

# SIGNS OF A STRESSED CAT

## WANTING TO HIDE FRIGHTENED



- Body curled up tightly low to the ground, making themselves as small as possible
- May back into a corner or go underneath something trying to put distance between them and what they fear.
- Ears out to the side
- Eyes wide, pupils dilated
- Tailed curled in close to body

## NERVOUS



- Eyes wide, pupils dilated
- Ears out to the side
- Tail low to ground
- Slightly crouched posture, ready to make a quick getaway

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## STARTLED / ALARMED



- Eyes wide, pupils dilated
- Back arched
- Ears slightly flattened
- Tail down but fluffed up

## THREATENED



- Eyes forward, pupils dilated
- Ears flattened
- Hissing/growling with teeth bared
- Tail curled in tight and fluffed

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## PAINED/UNCOMFORTABLE



- Body hunched with head below shoulder line, paws on the ground rather than tucked
- May be hiding under furniture or in an unusual spot for them
- Ears out to the side
- Eyes narrowed or closed
- Tailed curled in close to body
- Muzzle tensed, with whiskers straight out
- Also known as “Feline Grimace”
- May require veterinary aid

## TERRIFIED



- Eyes forward, pupils dilated
- Ears flattened
- Hissing/growling with teeth bared
- Tail up and completely fluffed
- Back arched with fur on end to look as large as possible

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## NAUSEA



- Lip licking when they haven't been eating can indicate nausea
- May reject food or vomit
- Body posture may be similar to pained/uncomfortable
- May require veterinary aid