




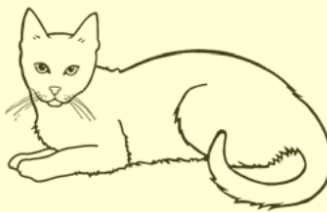








Reading your cat's "body language"

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

GREEN ZONE

YELLOW ZONE

RED ZONE

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.