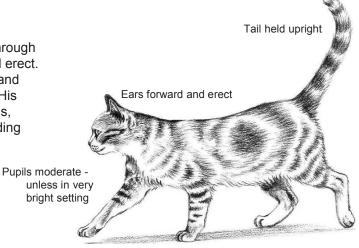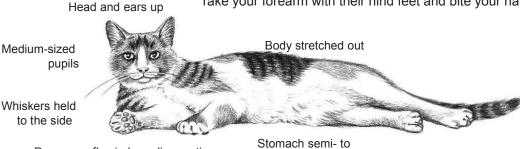# the confident cat

The confident cat purposefully moves through space, standing straight and tall with tail erect. He is ready to explore his environment and engage those he meets along the way. His upright tail signifies his friendly intentions, while his ears are forward and erect adding to the cat's alert expression.

Tail held upright

Ears forward and erect

Pupils moderate - unless in very bright setting

Purposeful upright walk

the confident cat at ease

When relaxed, a confident cat stretches out on his side or lies on his back exposing his belly. He is in a calm but alert state and accepts being approached. His entire posture is open and at ease; but beware, not every cat that exposes his abdomen will respond well to a belly rub. Some will grasp your hand with their front paws, rake your forearm with their hind feet and bite your hand.

Head and ears up

Medium-sized pupils
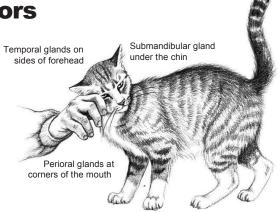
Body stretched out

Whiskers held to the side

Paws may flex in kneading motion

Stomach semi- to completely exposed

distance-reducing behaviors

Distance-reducing behaviors encourage approach and social interaction and are meant to telegraph to others that the cat means no harm. The act of rubbing against a person's hand or another cat (scent marking) to distribute glandular facial pheromones from the forehead, chin or whisker bed is calming and seems to guarantee friendly interaction immediately afterward. The tail is usually held erect while the cat is scent-rubbing.

Tail held erect

Temporal glands on sides of forehead

Submandibular gland under the chin

Perioral glands at corners of the mouth

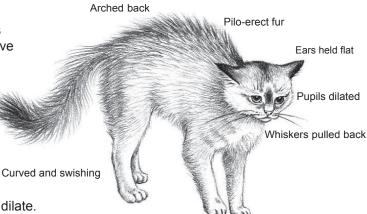Interdigital glands on the bottoms of all four paws
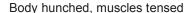
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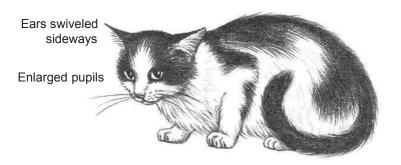
distance-increasing behaviors

The goal of distance-increasing behaviors is to keep others from coming closer. Aggressive interactions are avoided when the warnings are heeded. Conflicted cats lack the confidence to stare down and charge others. Instead, they assume a defensive threat posture, warning others away by appearing as formidable as possible by arching their backs, swishing their tails, and standing sideways and as tall as possible. Fear and arousal causes their fur to stand on end (pilo-erection) and pupils to dilate.

Arched back

Pilo-erect fur

Ears held flat

Pupils dilated

Whiskers pulled back

Curved and swishing

Paw ready to swat if necessary

Body hunched, muscles tensed

Ears swiveled sideways

Enlarged pupils

the anxious cat

When a cat becomes anxious, he crouches into a ball, making himself appear smaller than usual. Muscles are tensed and the cat is poised to flee if necessary. The tail is held close to the body, sometimes wrapped around the feet. The head is held down and pulled into the shoulders.

Tail held close to body, may flick out

defensive aggression

The pariah threat is another distance-increasing posture. When a cat determines that he cannot escape an unwanted interaction with a more dominant animal, he prepares to defend himself. The ears are pulled back and nearly flat against the head for protection and the head and neck are pulled in tight against the body. Facial muscles tense, displaying one weapon - the teeth. The cat rolls slightly over to one side in order to expose the rest of his arsenal - his claws. He is now ready to protect himself.
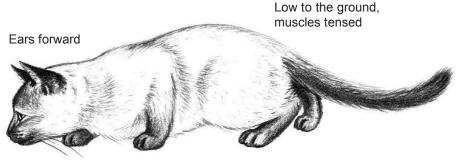
Ears pulled flat and back against the head

Pupils dilated

Facial muscles tensed, displaying teeth

Rolling over on one side to better expose claws

Paw ready to swat with claws exposed

Ears forward

Low to the ground,
muscles tensed

May shift weight between
back feet, readying to pounce

the predator

Even when fed two meals a day, cats are still predators. The predatory sequence is stalk, pounce, kill, remove, and eat. When stalking prey, a cat may stealthily move forward or lie in wait, shifting his weight between his hind feet. When movement is detected, the cat pounces on his prey and delivers a killing bite. He may then take the fresh-killed prey to a quiet place to eat – or a female may take it to her kittens. Even cats that don't hunt for their meals still enjoy chasing moving objects, including toys and, in some cases, human body parts.

Tremendous flexibility
allows cat to groom
nearly entire body

the groomer

Cats spend 30 to 50 percent of their waking time grooming. Backward-facing barbs on the tongue act as a comb to loosen tangles and remove some parasites. Beyond maintaining the cat's coat, grooming also relieves tension and promotes comfort. Licking also facilitates cooling off in warm weather.

Backward-facing barbs on tongue

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