

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