

Cats

Do you have a cat? Maybe you are thinking about getting a cat as a pet? Read on to find out more about these wonderful creatures.

The History of Cats

Did you know that all cats, including lions, tigers and our own pets, are descended from one prehistoric creature? And that it was cats that chose to live with people, not the other way round?

20 million years ago, the first carnivores that actually looked like cats walked the earth.

In 4000 BC, in ancient Egypt, the African wildcat began to enter towns in search of food. It chose to live close by to people.

Photo courtesy of @BibiCat - granted under creative commons license - cloudy



By 2000 BC, the Egyptians welcomed cats into their homes because they kept the snakes away. The Egyptians worshipped cats as sacred animals and banned them from being taken to other countries.

By 100 BC – 500 BC, domestic cats (cats who were used to living with people) spread across south-east Asia and India as cats were sold and secretly taken to new places.

By AD 500, The Romans had introduced cats to the whole of Europe.

In 1914-18, during the First World War, cats were used in the trenches to sniff out poisonous gas and on war ships to control rats.

By 2000, cats had become very popular pets – over 9 million pet cats live in Britain.



Body Language

Just because your cat can't use words, it doesn't mean he isn't talking to you. Cats are clever - they use body language to communicate with you and other animals.

Relaxed	 <small>Photo courtesy of @BibiCat - granted under creative commons license - m442</small>	Body language Tail up and relaxed, relaxed ears facing forwards, often walking towards you. Cat's mood Relaxed, friendly cat saying hello
Friendly	 <small>Photo courtesy of @BibiCat - granted under creative commons license - ggjn</small>	Body language Often starts with a tail up, cat rubs his head and side of his body around your legs and sometimes may roll over onto his side to show his belly. Cat's mood Relaxed, friendly cat saying hello; often seen if you have not seen each other for a while.
Unhappy	 <small>Photo courtesy of @BibiCat - granted under creative commons license - apardis</small>	Body language In a crouched position with tail tucked around or under his body and tense muscles. His eyes may look large and be darting about and ears back or moving, listening to sounds around him. He may lick his nose to show that he is unhappy and/or scared. Cat's mood Unhappy cat who might be looking for a place to hide, to run away and get up high.
Very Scared	 <small>Photo courtesy of @BibiCat - granted under creative commons license - consuetudo</small>	Body language Arched back, bushy tail and fur standing up to make herself look bigger. Often her eyes look huge as the black middle parts of the eyes (pupil) are big. Ears may be flattened against her head. Cat's mood Cat is very scared and fearful. She might feel trapped and may hiss or spit as a warning to stay back. Be careful as she may try to scratch or bite you to protect herself because she doesn't feel safe.

Looking After a Cat

A cat is the very best pet you can own.
Here are the key things you should know about looking after a cat.

You have to take your precious cat to visit **the vets** at least once a year. You must give your cat booster vaccinations and flea/deworm treatments regularly.

All cats need **vaccinations**. Feline infectious enteritis, cat flu and feline leukaemia can all kill cats so it is important to protect your pet against these diseases.



A good diet is very important to keep your cat fit and healthy. You must feed your cat quality tinned or dried food and always have fresh water available for them to drink.

You have to have your cat **microchipped**. A microchip is tiny – about the size of a grain of rice – and will help your cat to be returned to you if it is lost.

Which Cat is Right For Me?

There are lots of cats – usually mixed breeds called moggies - looking for new homes through rescue charities such as the Cats Protection and the R.S.P.C.A.

However, if you choose to get a pedigree cat, what can you expect from some of the different breeds?

Breed	Characteristics
Bengal	Beautiful spotted or swirly coat. Loves water and might join you in the shower. Often coos or chirrups instead of miaowing
Cornish Rex	Started in 1950 when a Cornish cat gave birth to a curly-haired kitten. Will often play 'fetch' with their toys like a dog!
Birman	Four white paws (which look like gloves) and bright blue eyes. The first Birman cats lived in Buddhist temples in Burma.
Siamese	Originally owned by the Royal Family in Thailand (formerly Siam). Talkative and welcoming to visitors, but can get jealous.

Questions 1 to 14 are about the text 'Cats'

1. How many pet cats live in Britain? Circle one.

5 million

9000

9 million

2000

2. Using the information on page 3, use the numbers 1-5 to put them in chronological order (oldest first)

Cats were used during the First World War to control rats on ships.

The first carnivores that looked like cats walked the earth.

Romans introduced cats to Europe.

Over 9 million cats now live in Britain.

African wildcats began to enter towns in search of food.

Use the table on page 6 to answer questions 3 and 4.

3. Which breed of cat is welcoming to visitors?

4. Which breed of cat might join you in the shower?

5. Using the information on page 4, draw lines to match these cat feelings to the correct body language.

friendly

tail up, ears facing forward,
walking towards you

unhappy

crouched position, tail tucked under,
eyes large and darting

relaxed

tail up, rubs side of head and body
around your legs, might roll over

6. On page 6, different breeds of cat are listed. Which word has the closest meaning to 'breed' in this context? Circle one.

name

animal

type

7. Find and copy the reason that the Egyptians welcomed cats into their homes.

8. What is the author's opinion of cats? Using words from the text, give two reasons for your answer.

9. Find and copy two ways in which a cat uses body language to show he is very scared.

1.

2.

10. Which breed of cat might you choose if you can't have a dog? Give **one** reason why.

11. On page 5, the author has used a different colour for some of the words on the page. Give **two** reasons why.

1.

2.

12. What might a Bengal cat do to get your attention?

13. Give **one** reason why were cats important during the First World War.

14. Why has the author written this text about cats?

Using the text, give at least three reasons for your opinion.
