

Purrfectly content: Purring



 Cats can purr for hours at a time. Sometimes the purring is soft and quiet, and sometimes it's loud and demanding; this is often the case if a cat feels frightened or ill

All's well

Purring is an unmistakable noise that has a blissful, soothing effect. Even a tiny, week-old kitten is capable of purring, usually when he is suckling; when his mother hears this sound, she knows that everything is fine.

When a mother returns to her kittens, she purrs to show her little ones that everything is in order. Adult cats also emit an intense purring sound to show that they have nothing but friendly intentions. Kittens purr to older cats around them, and the older cats will purr in response if they are happy to be in close contact with the kittens.

Cats sometimes purr when they are eating or playing, which signals that they are in a good mood. Purring is (at least in this context) a customary means between cats to show that they are good-tempered, although only ever between cats in the same family or group. Puppies or dogs within the family often receive vigorous purring from the cat.

Purring in pain

Conversely, cats also purr if they are ill or injured, in pain, or even dying. Possibly, they are trying to demonstrate their weakness and appease a potential

A mother's caress and quietly vibrating purr slowly ease the tiny kitten's anxiety.



recognising and understanding behaviour

enemy by reassuring them that they are not a threat; they may also be trying to comfort themselves as well.

Completely relaxed

The cat purr is very appealing; what cat owner is not familiar with the cosy feeling that the gentle purring of their cat provokes? The peaceful thrumming of his purr, which slowly builds until his whole body resonates with it, has a very soothing and positive effect on our wellbeing, causing blood pressure to drop and instilling a lovely sense of relaxation. A cat's gentle snoring is also quite soothing, but doesn't have the same comforting effect that the purr does.

The mystery of a cat's purr

Cats are able to purr when they breathe in and out, and also while they drink, eat, suckle, or doze. Exactly how they do this is still not really clear. There are several theories, but none of them is wholly conclusive:

- It could be due to movement or 'turbulence' in the circulatory system



After a cat has been stroked, he will usually clean himself in an effort to mingle his feline scent with the human aroma left behind.

- The vestibular fold next to the vocal chords may begin to move, which causes the vibrating sound as the cat breathes in and out
- It could be the result of alternating contractions in the larynx and diaphragm



Fleur and Tinker enjoy snuggling up together in the sun, purring in unison.

For the kids:

What your cat's face is saying

You can read your cat's face like a book. Don't just look at his ears, eyes and whiskers on their own, though, but take all of these into account at the same time, and this will tell you how your cat is feeling.



Chilled out

If a cat is completely relaxed, his ears point upward, with the opening facing forward. His whiskers sit at the side of his cheeks, or point slightly in the direction of the chin. He looks at you in a friendly way, but the size of his pupils will depend on how light it is.

Warning! Moody moggy!

If a cat is annoyed, he pulls his ears flat against his head, his whiskers stick straight out in front of his face, and his pupils are narrowed. This tells you that your cat would like to



be left in peace so don't disturb him, otherwise you may get scratched!

Fear

Eyes wide open, enlarged pupils and ears flat against the head tell you that your cat is scared. His whiskers may also be pressed flat against his cheeks. Do not tease or annoy him under any circumstances, as his fear could soon turn to anger!

Come and play with me!

If a cat is in a playful mood, the tips of his ears point upward. The forehead appears much higher than usual, and the pupils are dilated with excitement. The whiskers point forward, though are not stiff as with an angry cat, but softly arched instead.

Your cat may even let out a little



miaow or prod you with his paw to encourage you to play with him.

Child's play for cats

Take a toy (for example, a mouse tied to a piece of string), position it in front of your cat and then make it 'dance.' Your cat will follow it with interest and reach closer and closer

to try and hook it with his claws.

Don't play this game with bare hands, though, because you could get scratched in the heat of the moment (not on purpose but by mistake), and the game might come to a sudden end. You definitely don't want that to happen!

Dog-tired

If your cat is tired and blissfully content, he will curl up in a warm, snugly place with his whiskers relaxed, the third eyelid (which we do not have) extended over his eye, and his eyes more or less completely shut. Don't disturb him – let him doze! Whilst he is 'recharging his batteries,' you will notice that he snuffles his little nose and his ears tilt upward.



From fun to rough and tumble:

Cat play



Playing with prey

With his catch between his teeth, a cat may trot over to a secure and comfortable spot to eat his meal in peace. Sometimes, though, the catch is not eaten.

Often, cats will grip the prey with their claws to hold it still, but do not kill it straight away. Instead, they allow the creature to move a little so that they can then swipe it with a paw or toss it into the air, a behaviour that is both cruel and playful at the same time.

This behaviour, presumably, helps a young cat to become more

co-ordinated, whilst at the same time perfecting his hunting abilities.

It has been scientifically proven that hunger and the desire to hunt originate in different areas of a cat's brain, and these areas are not used in direct relation to one another.

This means, of course, that cats may hunt when they are not hungry.

In this instance, the cat may simply leave the dead prey without attempting to eat it, or, if it's still alive, allow it to escape only to catch it again to keep the game going.

This little kitten is already honing his skills in a game with one of his siblings.

