

The 'Love Messages' Cats Send – How Many Do You Recognize?

It may not be obvious that all of these 10 behaviors are love messages, but according to this cat expert, they are. One is the non-touch equivalent of being kissed, a simple action that if you mimic it back to your kitty, soon she'll be returning it to you.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If cats could communicate with words, they would undoubtedly tell their humans exactly what they want and need to feel loved and secure
- Cat guru Dr. Tony Buffington of Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine penned a "Letter from Your Cat" to help kitty guardians understand better how to care for their pets
- Cats show their love to their humans in a variety of ways that aren't immediately obvious unless you know what to look for

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published June 06, 2015.

Recently VetStreet ran an article titled "Letter from Your Cat: Do You Really Love Me?"¹ It was written by cat guru Dr. Tony Buffington, a professor at Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and the author of "Cat Mastery: A Guide to Understanding Your Cat."²

"Letter from Your Cat" is so wonderfully written and so full of useful information that I wanted to share it in its entirety with all of you here at Mercola Healthy Pets.

Letter From Your Cat: Do You Really Love Me?

"Dear Owner,

Thank you for rescuing me and taking me in — I love our home together. Now that we have been around each other for a while and I have grown up, it's time for us to agree on what we like and need for a strong and healthy relationship. Even though we are different in many ways, we both like to be shown love and expect to be appreciated and understood for whom we are.

As you know, I come from a long line of solitary hunters of small prey, who were themselves prey for larger carnivores (dogs) and primates (humans), so I need to be able to trust you to be comfortable with you (I'm sure you understand). I can show you how I feel with my body language. For example, please let me come to you when I want attention. Like you, I feel afraid when affection is forced upon me or when unwanted 'friends' (feline or otherwise) are moved into our house.

We both like to choose what we like to eat, drink, and use in the bathroom (***litter for me***, TP for you). When we are offered choices, we can express our preferences and be happy to have them respected.³ And speaking of bathrooms, we both like them private and clean. Imagine having to depend on someone else to flush and clean your toilet when they feel like it! If you have questions about this, our veterinarian friends have recently put out some great information for you.⁴

We also need to keep our nails in shape, and in addition to keeping them beautiful, I need mine to eat with and to protect myself. You can get yours done; I need to do my own, so I need a good place to scratch to keep them healthy and a little help from you when need a trim.

You can help me find the best places to do this in our house by putting a reminder (foil, sticky tape, etc.) on things you don't want me to scratch and by giving me a great place that is OK to scratch close by and praising me for using it so I'll know what you want (and don't we both love praise, too?).⁵

Speaking of praise, neither of us likes to be yelled at or hit. It is scary and makes us feel bad. It also isn't helpful just to tell us what not to do; we need to understand what we want each other to do instead. So please show me what you want by using the "scratching post strategy:" Put things on stuff you don't want me to scratch (climb on, sleep on, etc.) to remind me what not to use, but then give me places that are OK to use — and praise me lavishly for using them.

We also both like our things left alone. You have drawers to keep your things out of sight, and I like my things — food and water bowls, litterbox, resting area — in quiet, private places. And you know how we really don't love going to the doctor but know we need to?

If one of my resting places also is a nice cat carrier, taking me to the veterinarian for my annual checkup will be a lot less stressful for both of us!⁶ You could even put a scratching post next to it so I can stretch after I get up from a nap like you do.

And we both like hunting for food. For you, it's finding that great new restaurant before anyone else does; for me it's prowling our house in search of prey. Just like you, I have my favorites, and I can show you what they are if you'll give me the chance.⁷ There also are toys that dispense food that I might like to play with while you are away (just do an Internet image search for 'cat food puzzle' to see all the possibilities to make or purchase for me).

I hope this helps you understand how much we have in common and how easy it is for you to show me you love me as I love you. Just follow the Golden Rule!

Sincerely,

Your Faithful and Devoted Cat"

10 Ways Your Cat Says 'I Love You'

1. **He grooms you** — Mother cats groom their kittens from the moment they're born, so being licked was one of your kitty's very first feelings of being cared for. Siblings raised together often groom each other throughout their lives. So if your kitty is licking you, she's showing her love for you.
2. **She rubs her body against you** — Rubbing is how cats show contentment and affection. If your kitty rubs up against your leg or your face or head butts you, she's putting her scent on you and claiming you as her own. It's important to your relationship and bond with your cat to allow her to rub against you.
3. **He gives you love bites** — This show of love from your kitty can prove to be a bit painful, especially if he nips at your nose or elsewhere on your face, as many cats do. Kitties nip each other affectionately, and their skin is tougher than ours, so your cat really doesn't understand his love bite isn't always pleasant for you.

Nipping seems to be an instinctive drive in some cats and so it's difficult to stop the behavior. But since it's pretty easy to predict when you're about to get "love bit," the best plan is to get your face, finger or other body part out of the way ahead of time.

4. **He pretends to 'mark' you** — Male cats urine mark to claim their territory. Since much of your kitty's love for you takes the form of claiming you as his own, don't be surprised if your male backs up toward you with a quivering tail. Fortunately, it only seems he's about to urine mark you — he won't actually produce a urine spray.

Occasionally, a cat may show love by urinating in his owner's bed. This is most often a show of love and not a show of aggression or defiance, as many cat owners mistakenly believe.

5. **She rubs her gums against you** — It's a little weird, but ... if your cat rubs her gums (usually the upper gums) against you, know that it's just another way she's claiming you as her own and showing her love for you.
6. **He blinks slowly at you** — This might be the display of cat love that is easiest for humans to understand. If your kitty first stares at you, then blinks, then opens his eyes wide, then slowly blinks a second time, he's telling you he loves and trusts you. It's the equivalent of being kissed, in fact. According to Jackson Galaxy, a California-based cat expert who hosts "My Cat from Hell" on Animal Planet, if you mimic this behavior to your cat, soon he'll begin returning it to you.
7. **She purrs** — Newborn kittens can't yet see, so they are guided to their mother by her purr. That's why purring is a sign your cat is feeling content. Purring also lowers your kitty's heart rate, so she may sometimes purr to sooth herself. Unless your pet is ill or feeling stressed, rest assured her purring means she feels cared for by you.
8. **He brings you something dead** — When your kitty brings home a small dead something and presents it to you, it's a sign he feels safe and secure in your home.
9. **She rolls around in front of you** — When your cat either drops to the floor and rolls around, or jumps up on your bed or another piece of furniture and does the same, she's trying to get your attention and affection. When a kitty shows her tummy voluntarily, it's only to those she truly trusts and loves.
10. **He sleeps on you** — Your cat is most vulnerable when he's sleeping, so where he chooses to snooze must feel safe and secure to him. If one of his favorite nap spots happens to be your lap, legs, or the top of your head, consider yourself well-loved by your kitty.

Sources and References

VetStreet, February 3, 2015

¹ VetStreet, February 3, 2015

² [Ohio State University](#)

³ OSU.EDU Making Changes

⁴ CatVets.com House Soiling

⁵ OSU.EDU Scratching

⁶ CatVets.com Cat-to-Vet Handout

⁷ OSU.EDU Prey Preference
