

America's Favorite Pet – What Makes Them So Magical?

If you're one of the owners of these 96 million pets, you probably already know what makes them special. Here are 13 reasons just in case you need a refresher, or if you're one of the 54% of households who may not know what makes them so magical.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Cats have seemingly superhuman abilities that appear like magic
- Cats can re-orient their bodies in mid-fall, fit into impossibly small spaces, nap virtually anywhere, open doors, and seem to defy gravity
- Cats sleep up to 16 hours a day, much more than most other mammals
- Nearly half (46%) of U.S. households have one cat, 31% have two and 24% have three or more
- As most cat owners know, cats operate on their own time and at their own frequency ... and seemingly so do their owners

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There are nearly 96 million pet cats in the U.S., making them the favorite pet in America, at least as far as numbers are concerned (they beat out dogs, statistically speaking, which number at about 83 million).¹

If you're wondering just how popular cats are, nearly half (46%) of U.S. households have one cat, 31% have two and 24% have three or more.

Ironically, research conducted by Daniel Mills, a veterinary researcher at the University of Lincoln in the U.K., suggests that cats may not be as attached to their owners as dogs are. Mills, who is a professed cat lover, told the BBC:²

"Owners invest a lot emotionally in the cat relationship ... That doesn't mean that the cat's investing in the same sort of emotional relationship."

Many cat parents would disagree ... or at least love their cats anyway, in spite of this possibility. Perhaps our love affair with cats has to do not only with their carefully calculated affection ... but also with their sometimes seemingly superhuman abilities. Perhaps we're drawn to cats because, as The Dodo reported, they're basically magic!³

13 Reasons Cats Are Basically Magic

1. **Innate ninja abilities** — Cats don't always land on their feet ... but they're able to pull-off some ninja-worthy moves nonetheless. Your cat has an innate "righting" instinct that allows him to reflexively correct his

position while he falls so his feet hit first. Cats also have a flexible backbone that helps them to right themselves during falls.⁴

2. **They're sneaky thieves** — Has your cat ever stolen the pen off your desk? Sips of milk from your glass? Your sandwich from your plate? Cats can be quite adept thieves ... they don't call them "cat burglars" for nothing!
3. **They hide (sort of)** — Kittles love to hide behind your curtains, under your comforter, or couch flaps. But they have a way of giving themselves away. A tail sticking out from behind your fish tank or an unusual lump on your bed ... they're stealthy ... but not that stealthy.
4. **Cats can become liquid!** — Well, not really, but it can seem that way. Has your cat ever fit into a spot that seems impossibly small? If they can fit their head in, the rest of their body will follow suit, seemingly like magic, in large part because cats don't have rigid collarbones.
5. **They morph into new creatures** — Cats can scamper up tall ledges like monkeys, lick their paws like a bear and play fetch like a dog. They can also twist and contort their bodies into seemingly impossible positions.
6. **Cats can (and will) fit into any box** — If you place a cardboard box in your home, your cat will find it — and squeeze himself in no matter how big ... or small. This is largely instinctual, as cats look for places to hide in the wild so they can be safe from predators and stalk prey. As Stephen Zawistowski, science adviser for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, told Business Insider:⁵

"Cats like boxes because they are cryptic animals; they like to hide ... And a box gives them a place of safety and security."

7. **Gravity means nothing!** — Cats seem to defy gravity with their leaps, bounds, and love of tall heights. Interestingly, NASA partly funded a study to analyze mathematically the movement of a falling cat. Gaining insight into the "falling cat phenomenon," they reasoned, could help them develop maneuvers to help astronauts orient their bodies in space.^{6,7}
8. **They can nap anywhere** — A series of coat hangers, a railing, your computer keyboard ... cats can nap anytime, anywhere. And if it seems like your cat naps a lot ... he does. Cats sleep up to 16 hours a day, much more than most other mammals.⁸
9. **Maybe they can see through walls?** — Has your cat ever sat and stared at a wall for no apparent reason? It may seem as though he's staring straight through the wall, but in reality he's probably spotted an insect or other interesting spot.
10. **They're masters of escape** — If you've ever tried to close a door on your cat, you know it doesn't go over well. Either your cat will figure out how to open the door himself, or he'll get you to open it by default by scratching the floor, carpeting, or the door itself — or meowing loudly — until you relent.
11. **They earn respect from creatures twice their size** — A cat can ward off a large dog via intimidation ... a hiss, a growl, a thrash of the paw. Sometimes there's even an unspoken hierarchy between dogs and cats, with the cats on top — which is why you'll sometimes see your cat lounging in your dog's bed while your dog sleeps on the floor.
12. **Cats seem to bend the laws of physics** — They fit into spaces that seem far too small, climb up objects that seem entirely too steep, and leap seemingly straight up into the air with hardly any effort at all.
13. **Cats are cooler than pretty much everyone** — There's no doubt that cats have a coolness about them. And, despite popular belief, cats can be trained to do various tasks, including distinguish between different

quantities of objects and follow pointing gestures.⁹ However, although he may know how to do it, the hardest part is getting a cat to display his talents.

As most cat owners know, cats operate on their own time and at their own frequency ... and seemingly so do their owners. No one will argue that cats have each of their own unique personalities, but, interestingly, cat owners tend to display certain traits, such as being introverted, open-minded, intelligent and sensitive, and tend to be non-conformist rather than rule followers.¹⁰

Sources and References

¹ [The Humane Society, January 30, 2014 \(Archived\)](#)
² [Vox, October 16, 2014](#)
³ [The Dodo, January 13, 2015](#)
⁴ [Animal Planet, Why do cats land on their feet? \(Archived\)](#)
⁵ [Live Science February 28, 2022](#)
⁶ [Mashable November 22, 2014](#)
⁷ [International Journal of Solids and Structures, July 1969, Volume 5, Issue 7, Pages 663-670](#)
⁸ [Huffington Post, November 10, 2013](#)
⁹ [Live Science October 3, 2021](#)
¹⁰ [CBS News May 29, 2014](#)
