

Don't Be Insulted by This Kitty Behavior – It's Actually a Big Sign of Trust

You may think Garfield's being angry, defiant, or showing disrespect when he does this. But it's actually a sign of how much he trusts you, given he will always try to position himself for maximum safety. This and 4 other baffling feline behaviors explained inside.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Almost half of U.S. households include at least one cat, which means there's a lot of crazy cat behavior going on across the country
- If you have a cat at home, you've probably asked yourself at least once or twice, "What the heck is he doing?"
- Common curious cat behaviors include petting-induced aggression, strange conduct at the water bowl, and empty box obsession
- If your cat gets over-stimulated from petting or her "I've had enough" body language signals aren't apparent to you, she may lash out to make you stop
- If you have a grass or plant-nibbler in the family, consider offering safe, nutritious sunflower sprouts instead

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According to the most recent estimates, 43% of U.S. households are ruled by at least one cat, and the total number of pet cats is about 86 million.¹ That's a whole lot of kitties, which means there are a whole lot of humans puzzling over the often mind-bending antics of feline family members.

If you have a cat at home, you've probably scratched your head a time or two at your pet's baffling behavior. If so, you might find the following answers to common cat owner questions enlightening.

5 Weird Cat Behaviors Explained

1. **Touch me! Don't touch me!** Cats are famous for sending this particular mixed message. Miss Whiskers jumps into your lap or rubs against your legs. She's purring and looking at you with adoring eyes. You begin stroking her soft fur, and suddenly she lashes out with her paw or sinks her sharp teeth into you.

This is known in feline behaviorist lingo as petting-induced aggression and it usually occurs when your cat has decided she's had enough handling. Some kitties seem to have a very limited tolerance threshold for being touched by human hands.

If your cat gets over-stimulated from petting or her "I've had enough" body language signals aren't apparent to

you, she may lash out to make you stop.

If while holding or petting your cat you notice her skin twitching or her tail lashing ... if she stops purring or starts meowing ... or if her ears are flattened to her head or pointed backward, she's telling you, "Enough already!"

2. **The chew and spew** — This lovely feline pursuit happens both with cats allowed outdoor access, as well as indoor cats whose owners keep houseplants around. Let's say Garfield is out in your backyard (either on a harness or in a catio-type enclosure) and begins grazing on your lawn like a small fluffy cow.

Or perhaps he has an obsession with sampling your (cat safe) houseplants. In either case, typically what happens immediately after he eats greenery is that he throws it right back up.

There are many theories as to why cats (and dogs) eat grass. They are probably either trying to add something to their diet they instinctively know is missing, or they have an upset tummy and know that eating greenery will trigger vomiting and relieve discomfort.

If you have a grass or plant-nibbler in the family, consider offering safe, nutritious sunflower sprouts instead.

3. **Fun with water** — While it's true most cats fight tooth-and-claw to avoid being immersed in water for a bath, many kitties come up with fascinating ways to interact with their water bowl. For example, have you noticed some cats dip a paw into the bowl and then lick the water off?



You'd think just lowering her head to drink from the bowl would be simpler, but actually, from your cat's perspective, the paw maneuver makes sense. Perhaps her whiskers are hitting the sides of the bowl as she drinks. Cats don't like their whiskers touching things or being touched.

Or perhaps she's feeling threatened by another household pet (or human) and doesn't want to lower her head, which would mean taking her eyes off her surroundings.

Some cats seem to paw dip to determine where the water line is, while others appear to enjoy making the water move with their paw.

If your kitty seems to enjoy moving rather than still water, consider investing in a pet drinking fountain to keep her occupied and encourage her to drink more water. Always offer fluoride and chlorine free drinking water.

4. **Back it up!** Many cat guardians mistakenly believe that when Tigger turns his back on them, he's either angry or showing disrespect. Not true!

If your kitty leaps into your lap, then turns away from you before he settles in, or if it seems no matter where he sits, it's always with his back to you, he's showing you how much he trusts you.

As both predator and prey, your cat is naturally inclined to situate himself for safety. Non-threats (like you, his favorite human) will be to his rear as he positions himself to watch what's going on in front and to either side of him.

5. **Cat-in-the-box** — Many cats absolutely love boxes and will cram their fluffy behinds into a box half their size or some other tight space like a bowl or coffee mug. The reason? Cats are heat seekers.



Many cats feel their best when the temperature in the room is 86 to 96 degrees F. This is the range at which they don't need to use metabolic energy trying to warm up or cool down.

Of course, most humans are more comfortable in considerably cooler surroundings — typically 66 to 77 degrees F. Since home thermostats are set by human family members, cats have to find ways to warm up their immediate environment.

Cardboard boxes provide insulation, and small spaces in general require your cat to curl up, which preserves body heat.

Sources and References

[VetStreet](#)

¹ [American Pet Products Association](#)
