

Fascinating CATS

Breeds of cat and where they come from
Cat behaviour and biology · Owning and keeping cats



Classroom Materials

For primary school children

Fascinating Cats

Dear Teachers,

Nearly all children are fascinated by cats and why not? They're cuddly, soft, playful and in general are willing to engage with children. Yet cats are also individuals who sometimes need their own space and can be quite vocal and expressive when they feel threatened or are surprised by human approach.

Children have ample opportunity to interact with cats: An estimated 60 million cats live in Europe: they are part of our daily lives either in the family or in our neighbourhoods.

This booklet "Fascinating Cats" is aimed at explaining to children in an easy, lively and interactive way the origins of cats, their domestication, their biology, some breeds, their role in society and in particular how cats behave and how to behave with cats: we believe that children can learn a lot about animal behaviour and understand more about animal welfare by studying the cat, one of our most popular and familiar pet animals.

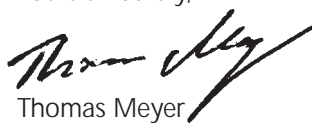
"Fascinating Cats" was developed by educational experts and is already used by teachers and children in German schools to great success. The teachers have appreciated having a stimulating, useful and well-documented subject for primary school use while the pupils have enjoyed having such a lively and interactive topic as part of their curriculum.

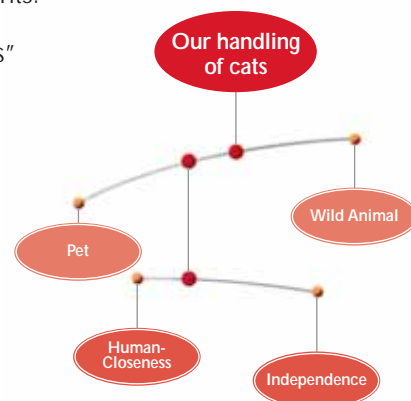
This free material can be downloaded from the FEDIAF internet.

This booklet is also a "living document" so if you have any comments, ideas or suggestions for improvements on how to apply this material in your courses, we would welcome your comments.

We hope you have enjoyable and successful sessions using "Fascinating Cats" with your pupils.

Yours sincerely,


Thomas Meyer
Secretary General · FEDIAF



Social individualists or "Three cats won't catch one mouse" Some notes on the teaching concept

Dear Teachers,

Cats are wonderful pets because their demands and expectations match many human needs. Nevertheless, we humans often have difficulty understanding these complicated creatures, particularly their motives, their contradictions and their strong individuality. Cats are not so much social loners as highly sensitive animals that always hunt alone. Due to their similarities with wild animals, cats appear to lead very independent lives, while at the same time having very flexible social relationships towards other cats and towards people.

The ambivalent "idiosyncrasies" of cats are a common thread running through the competence-centred information and materials in this booklet. "Fascinating Cats" conveys practical knowledge and information about keeping cats in a species-appropriate way. It also fosters understanding and sensitivity on the part of school children towards the specific needs of these animals.

Our priority is that school children can learn to handle cats without supervision and with their own sense of responsibility, and with knowledge and understanding of the biology, behaviour and the "language" of cats. Our aim is that, with this acquired knowledge, school children can adjust and orientate their behaviour and communication with cats in appropriate ways, so that they may familiarise themselves with cats as living beings that need to be taken seriously. Knowing how cats behave and express themselves is essential in establishing a "species-appropriate" relationship between humans and all animals. Children describe their subjective experience of such relationships as original, interesting and loving.

We, too, like to learn new things. We are therefore delighted to receive any comments, suggestions and specific ideas you may have for improving these teaching materials, so that we can provide you with even better materials for lessons in the next edition.

Your team from "Fascinating Cats"

“Fascinating Cats” – master copy templates

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Information sheets:

Information sheets are for teachers and pupils alike; they contain information related to “Fascinating Cats” that is the basis for filling in the worksheets.

Worksheets:

Pupils can fill in the worksheets on the back of the respective information sheet during lessons or in study groups.

Small cats and big cats

The cat family is very large and is divided into “small cats” and “big cats”. In general terms, small cats, such as the lynx, can purr when they breathe in or out but cannot roar. In contrast, big cats – like lions and tigers – can roar but are generally unable to purr. Small cats have eyes with pupils that contract to a narrow slit in bright sunlight. The pupils of big cats’ eyes contract to a tiny point in bright sunlight. The domestic cat is a member of the small cat group.



Domestic cats are now found all over the world. Cats’ fur can have over two hundred different colour combinations.



Even though the lynx is really quite big, it is still one of the small cats, as it can purr or growl, but not roar.



The tiger is the largest living cat; it can reach a length of two metres or more from nose to tail tip, and weighs as much as 300 kg.



Lions are the only cats that live in truly co-operative groups (called “prides”). Male lions have a long mane, while the sand-coloured females have none.

I have learned that:

There are two very different groups of cats: big cats and small cats. Our domestic cat belongs to the small cat group.

Where did our domestic cat come from?

All domestic cats that now live with humans are descended from the African Wild Cat, which today lives in most parts of Africa and Western Asia. African wild cats are around 85-100 cm long (measured from the nose to the tip of the tail) and weigh 4-6 kg – just like most domestic cats. Their fur is sandy-coloured; they have dark stripes on the tail and the tips of their hairs are also dark. These wild cats live in many types of habitat, including the savannah and agricultural land, but they usually avoid climatic extremes, such as rainforests.



From wild cat to domestic cat

Around 9,000 years ago, when men began to build settlements and villages in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, and grow cereal crops and store grain and other produce, it wasn't long before mice started to raid their stores of food. Knowing they would always have enough mice to hunt and eat, some wild cats eventually followed the mice to the settlements. In Ancient Egypt, the cat was worshipped as an important goddess of fertility and motherhood. Grain merchants took cats on board their ships to keep down the rats and mice, and so cats were soon travelling by sea from Egypt all over the world.



I have learned that:

All cats are descended from the African Wild Cat. From their original home in Egypt, they travelled by ship all over the world and also settled in our country. Most cats are tame and love to be petted, but there is still a little of the wild, independent African loner in all of them.

Not all cats are alike

In the course of thousands of years, more than 40 breeds of pet cat have evolved from the African Wild Cat. There are differences in the length of their fur, the colour of their fur and eyes, their size and their personality. The Persian is the breed with the longest fur (15 cm), whereas the Siamese has fur only a few millimetres in length. The largest breed is the Maine Coon, which can reach a length of almost 100 cm. The smallest breed, the Singapura, does not grow any larger than a young cat of other breeds.

One breed that enjoys lots of petting and cuddling is the Ragdoll, which got its name from its ability to tolerate being carried around like a doll. The Savannah is the wildest of them all, and is descended from the Serval (a small type of wild cat). The British Blue Shorthair, bred in Great Britain, is the best-known breed. The Chartreux is a very similar looking breed, but originated in France. Some breeds of cat have religious connections: the Birman (also known as the Sacred Birman or Sacred Cat of Burma) is said to have once saved the Dalai Lama's life. The Turkish Angora was said to be Mohammed's favourite cat, and for a time was only kept and bred in Ankara Zoo. The word Angora comes from the Turkish city of Ankara. Cats with curly fur, rather than straight fur, are called Rex cats. There are different breeds named after their place of origin: German Rex, Devon Rex, Cornish Rex.



Persian



Maine Coon



Devon Rex



Ragdoll



Siamese



Savannah



British Blue Shorthair



Birman



Turkish Angora



Domestic cat
or housecat

I have learned that:

There are many different breeds of cat. Although they are all descended from the African Wild Cat, their appearance can vary greatly. They also have very different personalities and characters. Just as people can be very different, cats are very different from one another, too.

1 Do you know the names of the cats in these pictures?
Match the letters to the names.



a)



b)



c)



d)



e)



f)



g)



h)

Ragdoll

Birman

Turkish Angora

Savannah

Maine Coon

Siamese

Persian

British Blue Shorthair

2 Collect drawings, photos and pictures of cats. Use them to make a poster with some friends and hang it up in your classroom.

3 Which is your favourite breed of cat? Collect as much information about it as you can and write about it in your exercise book.

4 Have you got a cat at home? Describe what she looks like, or maybe bring in a photo to show the class.

How cats "talk"

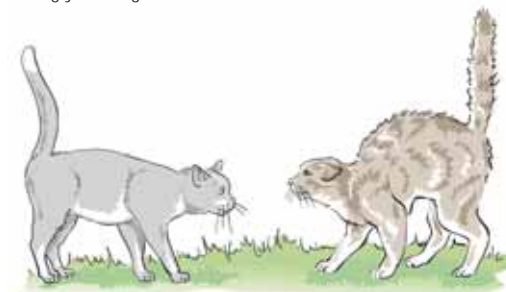
Cats usually "talk" to each other using body language and scent markers; they rarely use sounds. They make themselves bigger when they want to impress or threaten, and smaller when they are afraid. Cats use their tails to show other cats how they feel: a cat in a good mood points her tail straight up in the air; a tail waving from side to side means the cat is excited, and a cat that is angry or startled has a bushy tail. Cats also use their ears to show their moods: if the ears are pointing forwards, the cat is curious; a frightened cat's ears lay flat, and angry cat's ears stick out to the side.



This cat wants attention. She is rubbing herself against the boy's legs and marking them with a scent that humans cannot smell. Cats also try to catch your eye by looking you straight in the face.



This cat is excited. To be on the safe side, she is making herself as small as possible. The end of her tail is whipping excitedly from side to side, and her eyes are open wide, so as not to miss anything.



The cat on the right is threatening the other. She is standing on tiptoe, her fur is bristling and her back is arched. This makes her look much bigger than she really is.



When a cat is wide awake and alert, her face is quite smooth, the whiskers point forward, her eyes are wide open and the ears are turned to the front.



A cat that feels threatened lays her ears to the side, has very large pupils and laid-back whiskers. She will spit loudly if the threat comes closer.

I have learned that:

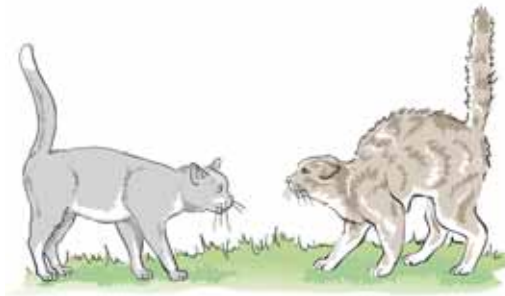
Cats do not usually use sounds to "talk" to us or other cats, instead using body language and scents. I must learn the cat "language" so that I know how to behave properly when a cat "talks" to me.

1 How does a cat express herself? Write down the ways that you know.

2 Which cat is "saying" what? Write the numbers in the boxes.

- a) What do you want? I'm very excited.
- b) Don't come too close – I'm stronger than you.
- c) Hey, I want you to stroke me!

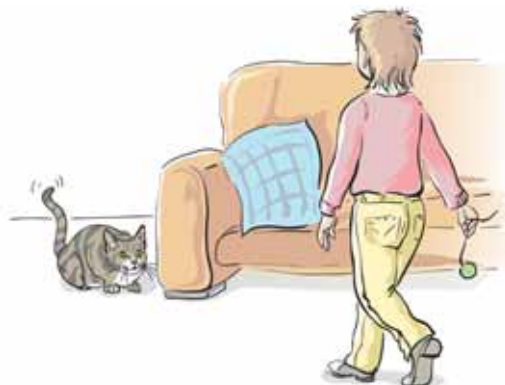
①



②



③



Dogs and cats speak different languages

Pet dogs live with human families. They enjoy human company and do not like being alone. Cats are completely different: they can look after themselves, do not depend on other cats, and like to roam around on their own. Dog and cat “language” is also very different. When a dog rolls over on his back, he is saying: “I’m defenceless, don’t hurt me.” When a cat is on her back, she can put out all her claws, which means: “Beware!” This causes a lot of misunderstanding when dogs and cats first live together. In time, though, cats learn to understand dogs and vice versa, so they can even become friends.



When a cat purrs, it is usually a sign of friendship. She wants to be stroked and made a fuss of.

When a cat lifts a paw, she is threatening to use her claws and you had better leave her in peace.

A cat whose tail is waving to and fro is in the mood for hunting. Don’t get in her way, or you might feel her claws!



A dog growls as a warning not to come too close.

When a dog lifts a paw, he is often looking for attention and asking to be stroked or petted.

When a dog wags his tail, he is happy and excited and is asking for, or looking forward to, a game.

I have learned that:

Cats and dogs are very different animals. They speak different “languages”, too, so the same movement or body language can also have a completely different meaning. I must learn to recognise the differences and adapt my behaviour to suit the situation.

1 Describe the situations in the pictures and write down how you should behave in each situation. These keywords may help you:

waving her tail / wagging his tail, lifting a paw, growling, (don't) stroke, keep still, leave alone, play

a



b



c



d



The cat physique

All cats are carnivores and use their perfectly constructed body to the full when hunting. Cats are slim and muscular, and have long legs. They also have a very flexible and supple backbone. Their strong teeth and jaws are designed to grab, hold onto and ultimately kill their prey in order to help them survive in the wild. A cat can retract her claws when she wants to creep silently or hunt; she extends them again when she needs to climb, or to catch and hold her prey.



Whiskers

Cats have special hairs - known as whiskers - on their cheeks. They have similar whiskers over their eyes, too. Cats use their whiskers to detect close obstacles in the dark and may also use them for sensing temperature.



Fur

A cat's fur covers her entire body, except for the nose and paw pads. It is made up of a layer of short, dense down - also called the undercoat - and a layer of longer, finer hairs that determine the colour of the cat's fur.



Teeth

Cats have 30 teeth, 16 in the upper jaw and 14 in the lower jaw. 4 of these teeth are called canine teeth, just like in dogs. These dagger-like teeth, or fangs, are the sharpest and longest. Cats also have molars, including carnassials which are used for shearing and slicing meat.



Paws

The parts of the paw that touch the ground when cats walk and run are the equivalent of our fingers and toes. Cats are digitigrades, i.e. creatures that walk on their toes. Their hands and feet never touch the ground. A cat has five claws on each front paw and four on each hind paw.

I have learned that:

Cats are carnivores with very sharp teeth and claws, but they can also be very gentle. However, when I play with a cat, I still need to take care that she doesn't nip or scratch me.

1 Put these words in the right places in the gaps in the following text:

whiskers, claws, fangs, nose, carnassials, pads

All cats are carnivores; their bodies are superbly adapted to their lifestyle.

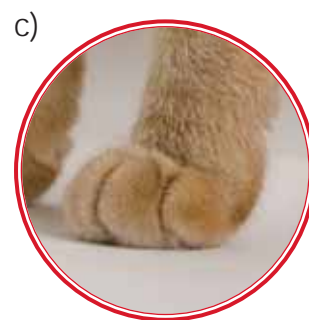
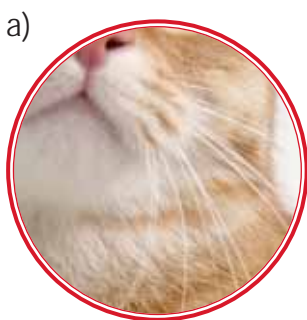
The cat's strong teeth can grab, hold onto and ultimately kill their prey, in order to help them survive in the wild. A cat's sharpest teeth are called a) _____ .
A cat also has molars, which include the b) _____ .

Cats have special thick hairs on their faces for feeling obstacles in the dark and sensing temperature. These thicker hairs are also called c) _____ .

Cats have d) _____ on their paws. They are normally hidden and the cat only extends them when they are needed. Cats extend them to catch their prey while out hunting, for example or when sharpening them on trees.

The cat's body is almost completely covered with fur. The only places with no fur are the e) _____ and the f) _____ .

2 The cat has several distinctive features. Choose one of them from the pictures below and describe the feature shown there.



Sharpened senses

Cats are self-reliant animals whose survival in the wild depends on being able to hunt small creatures at all hours of the day and night. That's why cats' eyes have to be able to see at very low light levels as well as in bright sunshine, and their ears must be capable of picking up the faint, high-pitched squeaking noise of mice; a sound that humans cannot hear.



Ears

Cats have large, funnel-shaped ears that they can move independently of each other. Unlike us, they don't have to turn their heads to hear something better. A cat's hearing is so acute that she can hear the sound of a mouse scuttling through long grass and even her kittens calling her at an ultrasonic sound level just after they are born!

Eyes

At night, the cat opens the pupils of her eyes as wide as they will go. As the pupils are then large and round, it is easier for moonlight to reach a unique layer of special sight cells behind the cat's eyeball. The faint light falling on this layer is then focused and concentrated, so that the cat sees everything much more clearly than we are able to.

Nose

The cat does not need to use her sense of smell when hunting. What a cat does smell, however, are the scent "messages" of other cats; she can then use this information to tell whether they are male or female, and if they are ready for mating.

This is how you see:



This is how a cat sees:



I have learned that:

Cats have very fine, but delicate senses. For example, my cat has much better hearing than I have. I mustn't play loud music or make a lot of noise when she is around.

1 Which of the following statements are true? Tick the box.
(In some cases, both statements are true.)

a



Which two senses are particularly important for a hunting cat?

- The eyes and ears are particularly important when hunting.
- The nose and eyes are particularly important when hunting.

b



What is special about the cat's ears?

- The cat can move her ears independently of each other.
- The cat has to turn her head when she wants to hear something especially well.

c



What does a cat use her nose for?

- A cat needs her nose mainly when hunting.
- A cat uses her nose to pick up important scent messages from other cats.

d



What does a cat do with her eyes at night in order to see better?

- She closes her pupils almost completely.
- She fully opens her pupils.

e



What can a cat tell from the scent of another cat?

- Whether the other cat is ready for mating.
- Whether the other cat is male or female.

f



What is the difference between a cat's sense of hearing and a human's?

- A cat's hearing is more sensitive and better than a human's.
- Human hearing is much more sensitive and better than a cat's hearing.

From kitten to adult cat

Cats are mammals: they give birth to live kittens that feed and grow due to the nutrients found in their mother's milk. Cats in the wild usually come "on heat" – that is, they are ready to mate and have kittens - in spring and summer. However, due to modern housing conditions and indoor living, female cats can also cycle throughout the year, so it is the best to get your cat neutered to prevent unwanted pregnancies. The kittens are born about two months after mating. Although they cannot see yet, and have no teeth, they already have a sense of touch and temperature through their nose, which enables them to find the way to their mother's teats. Cats usually have between four and six kittens, which they then suckle for five to six weeks. A cat has eight teats, so she could feed and raise up to eight kittens at a time. The first milk also contains important antibodies to protect the kittens against disease.



The first weeks of life

Cats develop amazingly fast in the first four weeks of their lives. For the first ten days they cannot see and cannot shiver, so it's important that they live in a very warm and safe environment with their mother. After only ten days, the kittens can open their eyes, hear, spit and meow. At a fortnight old, they still crawl rather unsteadily, as their legs are not strong enough to support their weight yet. At the age of three weeks, they try to lap up their first semi-solid food. At four weeks old, they are ready to start to play and this is when they get to practise the skills and instincts that they were born with.



A cat becomes part of your family

Young cats usually move in with their human family at about twelve weeks of age. The games they have played with their brothers and sisters have taught them how to stalk and attack prey, and how to defend themselves or flee from danger. If they have grown up among humans from the very beginning, they are already friendly to people and will allow you to stroke and pet them.



The self-reliant cat

At one year old, cats are like adult humans. They can feed themselves, but do not object to being fussed over and spoiled as well! Since they have gained a lot of experience, they know what to avoid – tangling with dogs, for example – and what is good for them, such as seeking refuge up a tree. They are completely at ease in their home and with the humans they share it with.

I have learned that:

Cats, just like me, have to learn a lot of things. They need a lot of care and attention at first, but they grow up quicker than I do and can look after themselves in many respects at an early age.

Which is the right cat for me?

There are lots of ways of acquiring a cat. Sometimes a neighbour's cat has had kittens, and there is nearly always a litter or two at local farms or stables. There are advertisements for cats in the newspaper or online, but animal shelters and cats' homes are also full of kittens waiting for a good home. If you want a pedigree cat, you should buy one from a registered breeder.



A pedigree kitten

You can buy a pedigree kitten from one of the breeders that specialise in the type of cat you are looking for. The breeder takes care of the newborn kittens and arranges for them to be vaccinated against the most common diseases as well as ensuring they have been treated for worms and fleas. Right from the start, pedigree cats are often very affectionate.

A cat from the farm

Kittens that come from a farm litter are sometimes only half-tame and can be quite wild. Some will need to be taken to the vet to be given the necessary vaccinations and treated for worms and fleas. In due course, these cats should also get used to life in a family, and they will usually need to be allowed outdoors frequently.

A cat from the animal shelter

In spring and autumn, lots of kittens that nobody wants to keep are given to animal shelters or cats' homes, where they are given the health care and attention they need. The cats are usually house-trained and love the company of humans.

Cats in the home

Cats are curious creatures who want to explore everything and go everywhere. Indoors, they crawl into all the corners, jump on to shelves or cupboards and climb up the curtains. To stop them from breaking things as well as injuring themselves, we should always make sure that there are no gaps on our shelves for cats to fall through. Always keep dishwasher and washing machine doors closed and make sure poisonous house-plants are out of the cat's reach. Also remember that your cat must never be allowed inside the cupboard where cleaning materials are kept. When we leave the house, we always have to make sure that tilt-and-turn windows are closed so that a cat can't be trapped in one.

I have learned that:

I must remember that a cat from an animal shelter or a farm might not behave in the same way as a pedigree kitten from a breeder, so I need to think carefully about what kind of cat will suit my family best. In the home, I have to take precautions to stop the cat from hurting herself.

How to make your cat feel happy at home

When a cat first moves in with a new family, she may miss her mother, her brothers and sisters and the people who have looked after her up until then. She may feel very lonely and try to make friends with everyone who lives in the house with her. The cat wants to feel secure; she needs someone to stroke her and play with her. She needs a litter box that is kept fresh and clean, and a scratching post to play on or sharpen her claws. All cats need a constant supply of fresh, clean water and regular special cat food, and some require frequent brushing or combing too. By the way, if there is a cat in your home, you should always take a few hygienic precautions to avoid becoming ill, such as washing your hands whenever you have been playing with your cat and especially before and during eating your own food.



You look like a giant to a cat, so to avoid frightening her when she wants to play, crouch or kneel on the ground. Then you will be at the same height as the cat and she will feel safe playing with you.



Cats want to be near you even when you are not paying direct attention to them. They need more sleep than we do, so they like to have a doze or a nap near to where you are sitting. When your cat does this, be sure not to disturb her by playing loud music, for example.



Never pick up a cat by the scruff of her neck; this is something that only mother cats do with their kittens, and it will hurt an adult cat. This is how to lift a cat properly: simply place one hand on the cat's chest, just behind the forelegs, and support her rump with the other hand.



The litter box must be kept clean and in a quiet place where the cat will not be disturbed when using it. Always make sure to leave the door open to the room where the litter box is kept.



Cats are naturally curious and want to see what is going on outside. See that your cat is able to jump onto the windowsill easily whenever she wants, and that there is room for her to sit there.



Leave your cat in peace when she is asleep. You may frighten her if you wake her up.

I have learned that:

A cat wants and needs a lot of things: she doesn't only require feeding and looking after, but may also want to play, or simply sleep. I must learn the right way to behave in various situations, so that the cat feels safe and comfortable in my home.

1 What's wrong here? How would you do it correctly? Write down your answers; the following keywords may help you:

loud music, leave in peace, pick up by the scruff of the neck, play, litter box, windowsill

a



Wrong: _____

Correct: _____

b



Wrong: _____

Correct: _____

c



Wrong: _____

Correct: _____

d



Wrong: _____

Correct: _____

e



Wrong: _____

Correct: _____

f



Wrong: _____

Correct: _____

Cats learn, too

As soon as newborn kittens open their eyes, they learn a lot by observing and imitating what they see. They watch their mother grooming herself and practise washing themselves or sharpening their claws when she does. They learn other things by constant practice, such as jumping safely and accurately, keeping their balance on a narrow bar or beam, or landing softly after a jump or fall. Cats learn from humans, too: they soon get to know their name and to come when called. They also learn what they are allowed to do from our responses.



What cats learn from their mother

The mother cat shows her kittens how to keep their fur spotlessly clean and how to sharpen their claws. She also shows them how to catch and eat mice. She teaches them which animals they can hunt and which ones are dangerous e.g. foxes, or horses (whose hooves could give them a nasty kick). By watching their mother, young cats also learn cat body language and what the various scent signals mean.



What cats have to learn from us

The first thing a cat learns from us is her name. Everyone in the family should use the cat's name when they speak to her; by doing this, we make sure that the cat soon knows who we mean when we call her. We also show the cat where her litter box is, and that scratching or biting us hurts. We teach the cat to understand that there are things we like and things she is definitely not allowed to do.

Training a cat properly

When we want a cat to do something, we usually ask her in a high-pitched voice and call her by her name. If the cat has done something well, we praise her; if she has done something particularly well, we give her a titbit as a reward. Saying "No!" or "Stop!" in as deep a voice as possible, and without using the cat's name, will soon teach her what she is never allowed to do. We can also clap our hands if the cat does something forbidden; this will alarm her and teach her: "I must not do that".

I have learned that:

The cat, like me, must learn a lot of things. She learns many of them through play with her mother and littermates. There are other things that it is my job to teach her, and particularly what she is not allowed to do. This will help us and our cat to lead a happy life together.

1 What does a cat learn from her mother? What does she learn from humans? Tick the box. Rearrange the letters you have ticked to form a word that has to do with the cat's body.



a)

Cat

Human

 E

 C

Not to eat from the table



b)

Cat

Human

 C

 L

Use the litter box



c)

Cat

Human

 A

 T

Bring up kittens



d)

Cat

Human

 W

 E

Hunt mice



e)

Cat

Human

 R

 S

Sharpen her claws on the scratching post

SOLUTION:

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2 What rules do you have to learn, or have you already learned, as a child? Tell a little story. (You can note a few keywords here, if you like.)

What a cat needs

Your home is a little world where your cat should feel safe and comfortable. A cat needs a bowl for food and another for water; put the litter box in a separate room as cats don't like to eat and go to the toilet in the same area. Provide a scratching post where your cat can climb, play or sharpen her claws, and see that there is a place for your cat to sit and look out of the window. Cats love to play with toys, such as a ball or a furry toy mouse and you should always have a supply of titbits in the house. If you have a long-haired cat, you will need a comb to brush her, although other cats love to be brushed gently, too. A cat can never have enough soft cushions and cosy baskets to lie in; and don't forget a suitable travelling basket for when your cat has to be taken to the vet. Cats that are allowed outside sometimes eat grass to get rid of the hairballs that result from the cat swallowing hairs when she washes herself. Indoor cats can benefit from cat grass or special cat food that is designed to help with hairballs.



Care

Just like humans, cats lose old hairs all the time and grow new ones in their place. When you brush your cat, the dull, old dead hairs stay on the brush and, as a result, the cat's fur is especially smooth and glossy afterwards. Long-haired cats must be brushed every day so that their fur does not become tangled; all other cats should be brushed once a week. They often quite like being brushed and enjoy the extra attention.

Feeding

It is best to give your cat two or three small meals spread over the day. After all, cats don't catch and eat more than one mouse at a time! Ready-made cat food from the supermarket or the pet shop contains everything a cat needs for a healthy diet. Never feed your cat scraps left over from the table, as our food often contains too much salt or other things that are unhealthy for cats.



Healthy teeth

Cats, like humans, have baby teeth that fall out and which are replaced by permanent teeth before the cat is a year old. A cat needs good teeth in order to survive, because in the wild she eats her prey complete with skin, bones and muscles. Unfortunately, cats often have unhealthy plaque deposits on their teeth, which then turns to tartar and has to be removed by a vet under anaesthetic. To avoid this happening too often, you can gently rub the cat's teeth with a soft cloth once a day or get them used to having her teeth brushed just like you do, but with a special cat toothpaste and toothbrush. Not all cats enjoy this, however, so it can be easier to give your cat special dry food or dental chews occasionally. This cleans the teeth as the cat eats, as well as combating harmful bacteria that might damage the teeth.

I have learned that:

My cat needs a lot of loving care and attention. I have to feed her properly and take good care of her so that she will enjoy a long and happy life.

Buying and keeping a cat costs money

If you want a cat, you should consider the fact that a cat will cost money and she will need to be cared for her entire life. If you get your kitten from a neighbour or a farmer, you do not usually have to pay very much for her. Animal shelters usually ask for a donation when you adopt a cat. Pedigree cats from a breeder's are often much more expensive.

At the beginning, you will need to buy some items to make your cat feel at home: scratching post, comfortable cat basket, travelling basket or cat carrier, feeding bowls, comb and brush and maybe also a cat harness and leash. There are also regular costs you need to cover for food, health treatments, toys, treats and other little things.



I should plan to spend money on

Buying a cat

- Animal shelter or breeder

Basic equipment

- Scratching post
- Bowls for food and water
- Litter box and cat litter
- Travelling basket or cat carrier
- Comb/brush
- Cushions/blanket/cat den
- Toys

Regular expenses

- Food
- Cat litter
- Flea treatment (every month)
- Worming treatment (every 3 months)

Vet

- Chip implant and registration book (one-off)
- Neutering operation (one-off)
- Check-ups/vaccinations (once a year)

Going to the vet

Even if your cat is healthy, she will still have to be taken to the vet after she has moved in with you. The vet will give her a thorough check-up, and then identify her by implanting a microchip under her skin. The chip contains a unique serial number, i.e. no two chips anywhere in the world have the same number. The vet enters this number in the cat's registration book, which you as the owner keep for the duration of your cat's life. The cat's name, and the owner's name and address, are also recorded in the registration book. The vet also records the vaccinations on a regular basis. Your cat needs to be vaccinated twice in her first year of life and once a year throughout her life against infectious diseases, such as cat flu and rabies. The vet also gives you treatment to protect your cat against worms, fleas and ticks. If your cat has not already been neutered, the vet will perform the operation before she is a year old. After this, you should take the cat to the vet once a year for her booster vaccinations and a general check-up.

I have learned that:

We have to spend money if we want the cat to have everything she needs. The cat must be taken to the vet regularly to be vaccinated etc.

3a

Cat breeds

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1.a) Siamese | 1.b) Turkish Angora | 1.c) Persian |
| 1.d) British Blue Shorthair | 1.e) Ragdoll | 1.f) Savannah |
| 1.g) Maine Coon | 1.h) Sacred Birman | |

4a

Cat language

1. Cats “speak” mainly using body language and scent markers. The way a cat holds her tail and ears give a good indication of her mood. Cats rarely “speak” using sounds.
2. a) 3 b) 1 c) 2

5a

Dog and cat language

- 1.a) When a cat raises her paw and extends her claws, she is threatening me. She doesn't want to play at the moment, so it would be better to leave her in peace.
- 2.b) When a dog wags his tail, he is pleased about, or looking forward to, something. Now is a good time for us to play together.
- 2.c) When the cat waves her tail from side to side, she is in the mood for hunting. To avoid being scratched, I have to be particularly careful and should not try to stroke the cat now.
- 2.d) When a dog growls, he is warning me. I should keep my distance for the time being. The best thing to do is simply to stand still and keep quiet.

6a

Biology of the cat I: Physique and teeth

- | | | |
|------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1.a) fangs | 1.b) carnassials | 1.c) whiskers |
| 1.d) claws | 1.e) nose | 1.f) pads |
- 2.a) **Whiskers:** A cat has whiskers on her cheeks and above her eyes. Cats use their whiskers to feel obstacles in the dark and to sense temperature.
- 2.b) **Fur:** Almost the entire body is covered with fur, with the exception of the nose and pads. The fur consists of short, dense down – also called the undercoat – and an outer coat of longer, finer hairs. The outer coat also determines what colour the fur of the cat has.
- 2.c) **Paws:** The parts of the paw that touch the ground when cats walk and run are the equivalent of our fingers and toes. Cats are digitigrades, i.e. creatures that walk on their toes. Their hands and feet never touch the ground. A cat has five claws on each front paw and four on each hind paw.
- 2.d) **Teeth:** Cats have 30 teeth in all: 16 in the upper jaw and 14 in the lower jaw. The canine teeth, or fangs, are the sharpest. Cats also have molar teeth, including the carnassials (for shearing meat).

7a

Biology of the cat II: Keen senses

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1.a) true / false | 1.b) true / false | 1.c) false / true |
| 1.d) false / true | 1.e) true / true | 1.f) true / false |

10a Treating your cat properly

- 1.a) **Wrong:** There are books and a ball on the windowsill, which stop the cat from jumping up to look out.
Correct: I would clear everything off the windowsill so that there is room for the cat to sit there and watch what is happening outside.
- 1.b) **Wrong:** The girl wants to play with the cat, but she is standing right in front of her. This makes her look much bigger, which frightens the cat.
Correct: I would crouch or kneel down when I want to play with a cat. I would then appear to be the same size as the cat, so she would not be afraid of me and we could have fun playing with each other.
- 1.c) **Wrong:** The children are listening to loud music. The cat is frightened and the noise hurts her sensitive ears, so she is running out of the room to escape.
Correct: I would turn the volume of the music right down or put on headphones if there were a cat in the room. This would not disturb or alarm the cat, and she would be happy to keep me company.
- 1.d) **Wrong:** The bathroom door is closed, so the cat cannot use her litter box. The child is sitting at the computer and does not see that the cat wants to go into the bathroom.
Correct: I would always leave the bathroom door open to allow the cat to use the litter box at any time. The door should only be closed when a member of the family is in the bathroom.
- 1.e) **Wrong:** The children are playing with the ball and letting it bounce on the floor although the cat wants to rest. This will certainly disturb the cat, and may even frighten her.
Correct: I would not play noisy games if the cat wanted to sleep in her basket. I could play in my room or go outside.
- 1.f) **Wrong:** The girl is picking the cat up by the scruff of her neck. Cats do not like this, and it actually hurts them.
Correct: I would place one hand on the cat's chest, directly behind the forelegs, and support her rump with the other hand. This is the correct way to pick up a cat without hurting her.

11a Training your cat:



- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1.a) Human (C) | 1.b) Human (L) | 1.c) Cat (A) |
| 1.d) Cat (W) | 1.e) Human (S) | |

Solution: CLAWS


Test


Cats are gentle, affectionate animals that are fun to play with, but there are things that they need, too. They must be fed and cared for regularly, and they need a home in which they can feel safe and comfortable.


The following test is an easy way to find out whether a cat would feel safe and comfortable in your home. Just read the individual statements carefully and tick the applicable box.

Test: "Is my cat happy?"		
My parents like cats.		
My brother(s) and sister(s) like cats.		
A cat lives on average for about twelve years, but can live up to twenty years. I can take care of her all of her life.		
I'm not allergic to cats' hairs.		
Nobody in my family is allergic to cats' hairs.		
A cat costs money and needs food every day. There are also extra costs, such as visiting the vet if the cat has had an accident or has been hurt. I would spend some of my pocket money on the cat.		
My parents would spend money on the cat.		
I can spend at least an hour a day looking after the cat.		
My parents would help me to look after the cat.		
There is a suitable place for a litter box in our home.		
Our house or flat is big enough to allow the cat plenty of room to move.		
When I go on holiday with my family, there are other people around to look after the cat, e.g. neighbours, nanny and granddad.		

Evaluation

Now count how many times you have ticked . Note the number of times here: _____

Have you ticked  ten times or more? Great, a cat would feel absolutely safe and comfortable in your family.

If you only have nine ticks or under next to , you and your family should sit down and think carefully about whether a cat would really feel safe and comfortable in your home.

If you are uncertain, you could also visit your nearest animal shelter. Lots of shelters are on the lookout for "godparents" who want to visit the animals regularly. This is an ideal way of getting to know cats better, and you may well find one that is just right for you.



1 Cat language

In what ways can a cat express herself? Write the ways here.

2 Cat breeds

Which cat breeds do you know? Name six breeds:

3 Treating your cat properly

What is important if you want your cat to feel safe and comfortable in your home? Tick the right answers:

- a) The room where the litter box is must be kept open at all times.
- b) I should always pick up my cat by the scruff of her neck; cats like this because it reminds them of how their mothers used to pick them up as kittens.
- c) If I want to play with a cat, I should crouch down to make myself seem the same height as the cat. If I don't, the cat could be frightened.
- d) A cat needs to be able to sit on the windowsill to look outside; I must keep the windowsill clear, so that there is enough room for the cat to jump up and sit.
- e) Cats love loud music, so I should always turn the music up to full volume when the cat is in the room.
- f) When a cat is asleep, my friends and I should be quiet; if we are not, the cat might wake up in a fright.

4 Training your cat

What does a cat learn from her mother? What does she learn from humans? Write down one example of each.

- a) What a cat learns from her mother:

- b) What a cat learns from humans:

1 Physique and teeth

How much do you know about a cat's physique and teeth? Answer the following questions:

- What is the name of a cat's sharpest teeth? _____
- What parts of a cat's body are not covered in fur? _____ and _____
- How many claws does a cat have on each front paw? _____
- What is the name given to the hairs that a cat uses to feel obstacles and sense temperature?

2 The cat's senses

Which of the following statements about a cat's senses are true? Tick the box:

- The eyes and ears are especially important when the cat is hunting.
- A cat can tell by the scent of another cat whether it is male or female.
- If a cat wants to listen to something very closely, she has to turn her head.
- A cat uses her nose particularly when hunting.
- In order to see better at night, cats open their pupils as wide as possible.
- A cat's hearing is much more sensitive than human hearing.

3 Dog and cat language

Do you know the difference between cat and dog body language? Explain it using the example "waving tail".

When a cat waves her tail from side to side, it means:

When a dog wags his tail from side to side, it means:

4 Bonus section

What do you know about the origins of the cat and the first few weeks in the life of a kitten? Fill in the gaps in the text below:

Origins: All domestic cats that now live with humans are descended from the a) _____. Today, these wild cats live in b) _____ and c) _____, mostly in the desert or the savannah, or in rocky areas near villages. Cats came to us many, many years ago from d) _____. Their job was to hunt rats and mice, so they travelled as passengers on grain merchants' ships.

The first weeks of a cat's life: Cats are e) _____. When the kittens are born, their mother feeds them on milk. The kittens' f) _____ shows them the way to the mother's teats; none of the other senses are working yet. When they are g) _____ days old, kittens can hear, spit and meow, and they can open their eyes. At h) _____ weeks, they start playing and learning from their mother, brothers and sisters. When they are i) _____ weeks old, the kittens can join a human family.

“What do I know about cats?” (Preliminary)**1 Cat language**

Cats “speak” mainly via body language and scent signals. It is easy to recognise their moods by the position of their tail and their ears. It is rare for a cat to use her voice to “speak”.

2 Cat breeds

British Blue Shorthair, Chartreux, Devon Rex, German Rex, Birman, Maine Coon, Persian, Ragdoll, Selkirk Rex, Siamese, Singapura, Turkish Angora...

3 Treating your cat properly

a) X b) - c) X d) X e) - f) X

4 Training your cat

a) What a kitten learns to do from her mother: keep her fur clean and wash herself, sharpen her claws, catch mice, use and understand cat body language, recognise scent signals ...

b) What a kitten learns from humans: her name, how to use the litter box, what she is not allowed to do ...

“What do I know about cats?” (Advanced)**1 Physique and teeth**

a) Fangs b) Nose and pads
c) Five d) Whiskers

2 The cat’s senses

a) X b) X c) – d) – e) X f) X

3 Dog and cat language

When a cat waves her tail to and fro, it means: “I’m in the mood for hunting. You had better not come too close, or you might feel my claws.”

When a dog wags his tail to and fro, it means: “I’m happy and excited, let’s play (or carry on playing)!”

4 Bonus section

a) African Wild Cat b) Africa c) Western Asia d) Egypt e) mammals
f) sense of touch g) ten h) four i) twelve

Note:

The “What do I know about cats?” test consists of two sections, Preliminary and Advanced. The tests should be set progressively, i.e. only pupils who have passed the Preliminary test can go on to take the Advanced test. Depending on the pupils’ age and learning level, the Preliminary test can be set on its own.

The test comes with a certificate that can also be awarded to the pupils.

We recommend considering the test “passed” when at least 50% of the pupil’s answers are correct.

Certificate





has passed the

“What do I know
about cats?” test



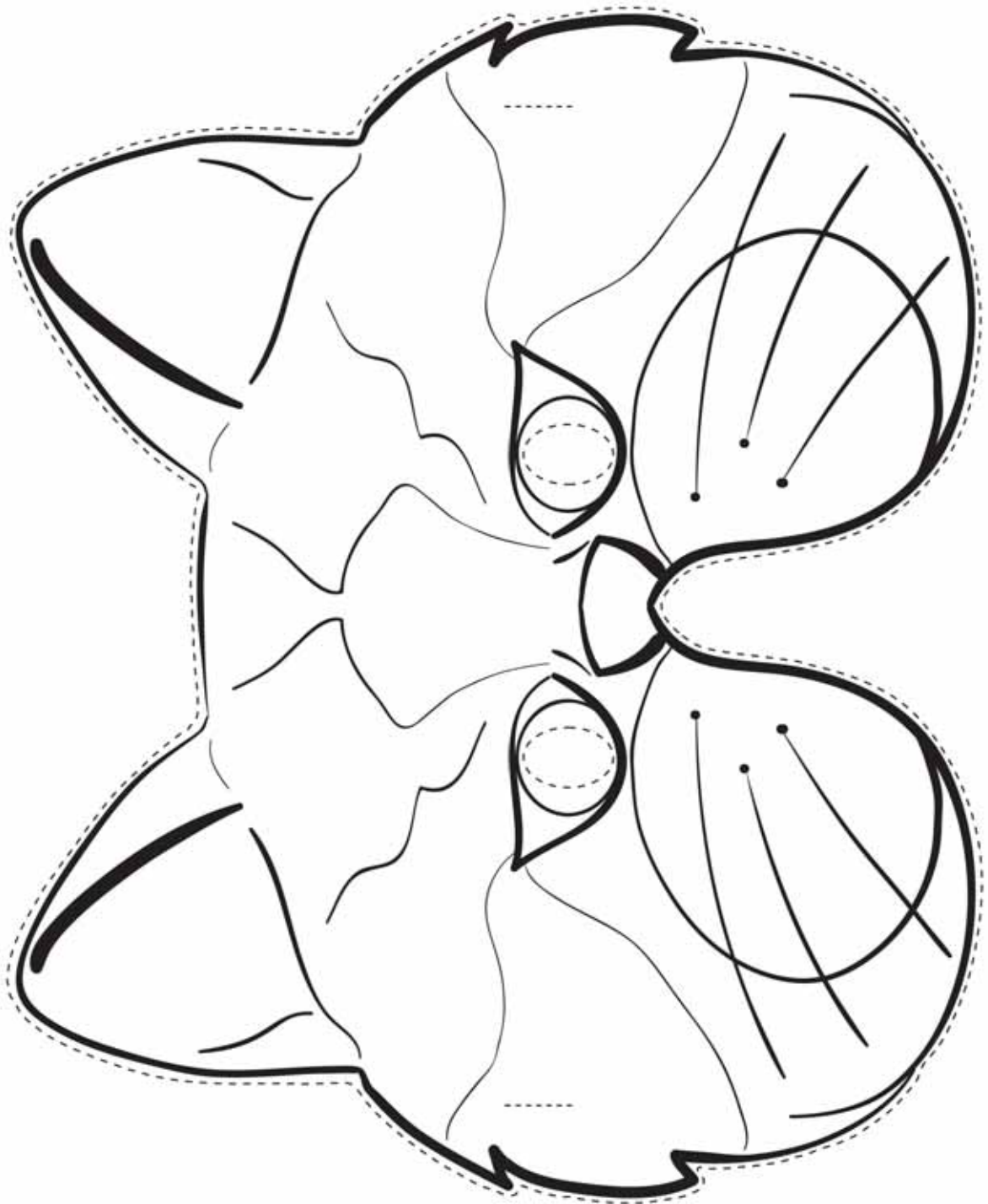
Place and date

Teacher's signature



1 How to make your cat mask:

1. Cut out the mask along the dotted line.
2. Cut out the eyeholes.
3. Cut out the slits for the elastic bands along the dotted lines.
4. Cut elastic bands to size and push them through the slits from the front.
5. Fix the bands at the back with a piece of tape or a knot.
6. The mask is ready to wear!



Brief explanation of terms used in the “Fascinating Cats” classroom materials.

Big cats

Lions and tigers, for example, belong to the big cat group. A distinguishing feature of big cats is that they can roar. In bright light, big cats' pupils contract to a pinpoint, whereas the pupils of a → small cat contract to a narrow vertical slit.

Breed

More than 40 different cat breeds have evolved over the last few thousand years. The respective breeds have different fur lengths, eye and fur colours, and also vary from one another in size and personality.

Breeder

When a female cat (→ Queen) mates with a male cat (→ Tom), she gives birth to kittens. People who see to it that cats of a particular breed mate with each other are called breeders. When the kittens are born, the breeder looks after them and arranges for them to receive their initial vaccinations and worming treatments before they go to their new owners. Young cats can be removed from their mother at about twelve weeks of age, as they should be fully weaned at this stage.

Carnivore

Meat-eating → mammals are known as carnivores. As cats in the wild hunt, kill and eat their prey, they belong to the carnivore category.

Cat grass

The cat grass you can buy at the pet shop is wheat sown or sprouting in a dish or tray. Cats like to eat grass to make themselves vomit. They do this to bring up hairballs or clumps of fur that they have swallowed during → fur care. To prevent → inside cats from eating plants that could be poisonous, always provide them with cat grass.

Cat litter

Cat litter is placed in the → litter box to allow the cat to bury her droppings. Cat litter can be made of various materials, but all materials serve to absorb moisture and reduce unpleasant smells.

Claws

Cats have five claws on each forepaw and four on each hind paw. The cat uses her sharp, curved claws to catch and grip her prey. The claws also give the cat a safe grip when climbing trees. When a cat is at rest, however, the claws are hidden in a skin sac.

Diet

All cats are → carnivores. Their diet is different from ours, and they cannot survive on the same food as humans do or they will get sick. Never give a cat food or leftovers from the table, as these can have a very serious effect on a cat's health. Ready-made cat food is ideal, as it already contains everything a cat needs for a healthy diet. Always make sure that your cat has plenty of fresh clean drinking water all the time.

Fur care

Cats wash themselves frequently by licking their fur, which also gets rid of excess hair. Groom long-haired cats regularly with a brush or comb to prevent tangles. Short-haired cats also love being brushed gently, of course!

Brief explanation of terms used in the “Fascinating Cats” classroom materials.

Heat, in or on

A female cat is “in heat” or “on heat” at the times when she is ready to mate with a → Tom to produce a litter of kittens. In the wild female cats come on heat in the spring, when the evenings stay light for longer. If the cat mates with a tom in this time, the kittens are born about 60 days later. A cat can also come on heat in early autumn, which is why most wild kittens are born in spring or autumn. However, due to modern living conditions which mean more and more cats are living indoors, they can cycle at anytime throughout the year, so it is the best to get your cat neutered to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

House-trained

A cat that lives in the wild, or a domestic → outdoor cat, uses the outside environment as a toilet. A cat that spends some of her time or – in the case of an → inside cat – all of her time inside the house in the company of humans must learn to use the litter box. A cat can be house-trained by showing her the litter box and praising the cat when she uses it. Provided that the box is clean and odour-free, the cat usually has no problems using it. Most cats want to be left alone when they go to the litter box. Make sure that you clean the litter box every day and wash it out once a week.

Hygiene

“Hygiene” is the expression used for all preventive measures related to health. In practice, this means staying healthy by following a few rules when there is a cat in the household. For example, you must always wash your hands after stroking the cat. It goes without saying that you must never eat anything that has been in the cat’s feeding bowl, and the cat must not eat from anyone’s plate. Ensuring the cat receives regular vaccinations, flea and worming treatments by the vet and you will help to keep the cat and your family healthy. Pet shops also stock tried and tested flea, tick and worming treatments to combat cat parasites.

Inside cat

Not all cats are → outdoor cats. A lot of cats never leave their owner’s home. If cats are used to this from the very beginning, they generally do not worry about staying inside all the time, provided they have plenty to occupy their minds and keep them physically active.

Litter box

Cats are very clean animals that use the litter box to pass urine or faeces. The litter box is either a covered or open box filled with → cat litter, which the cat uses to bury her urine or droppings. Litter boxes must be cleaned daily, and the cat litter changed weekly.

Mammal

Cats are mammals, i.e. they give birth to live kittens that they feed on milk. Cats usually have between four and six kittens, which they then suckle for about six weeks. A cat has eight teats, so she could feed and raise up to eight kittens at a time. The first milk also contains important antibodies to protect the kittens against disease.

Neutering

If you do not want your cat to have a family, you should have him or her neutered by the vet. This means that the cat’s sex glands are removed: in the case of the female, the ovaries; in the case of the male cat or tom, the testicles. This prevents the cat from reproducing. Neutering is especially important for → outdoor cats, as it is not possible to keep an eye on them all the time.

Outdoor cat

Cats that do not live exclusively indoors, but are also allowed out of the house, are “outdoor cats”.

Brief explanation of terms used in the “Fascinating Cats” classroom materials.

Paw

The parts of the paw that touch the ground when cats walk and run are the equivalent of our fingers and toes. Cats are digitigrades, i.e. creatures that walk on their toes. Their hands and feet never touch the ground. A cat has five claws on each front paw and four on each hind paw.

Queen

A female cat is known as a “queen”.

Scratching post

A scratching post is an upright piece of furniture, usually covered with fibres such as sisal, especially designed for cats. Cats can sharpen their → claws on it or climb up it without damaging the other furniture. All cats, even outdoor cats, should have a scratching post if they are to remain healthy and happy. The posts are available in many different colours, sizes and varieties.

Small cats

A distinguishing feature of small cats, such as the lynx, is their ability to purr when they breathe in or out. Small cats’ pupils contract to a vertical slit in bright light. The domestic cat is a member of the small cat family.

Tom

A male cat is known as a “tom” or “tomcat”.

Training

Unlike dogs, most cats cannot be taught to obey commands. Nevertheless, even kittens must be taught from the very beginning – by clear use of the word “No!” – what they are not allowed to do e.g. jump on the table. Cats soon learn their names and come when called.

Whiskers

Cats have special hairs – known as whiskers – on their cheeks. They have similar whiskers over their eyes, too. Cats use their whiskers to feel their way around obstacles in the dark and for sensing temperature.

Space for your own explanations or additions

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