



HELP WANTED

# 8 Things You Have to Explain to People Who Don't Have Cats

**A**s a cat lover, I'm constantly amazed by how little my non-cat-owning friends really understand about cats, their personalities, and their behaviors. So I have composed a list of eight things I find myself frequently explaining to people who don't have cats.

**Cats are smart.** People I meet are amazed when I tell them my cats all know their own names, and I can understand why that surprises them. A few years ago, I was reading a book about cat behavior, and the first chapter said that cats are unable to learn their names nor come when called. Nonsense! Not only do my cats know their names and come when called, they know and understand the names of the other cats in the household as well. They have also been taught not to jump up on the stove or counters, and they know that the word "no" means to stop whatever they are doing immediately. And they do!



GINA GIOLLI/5 STUDIO



BIGWOLFSHUTTERSTOCK

**Cats are loving.** Contrary to their aloof stereotype, cats are actually very loving. From head-butts to love bites, cats show their affection for us in many different ways. My cats run to the door to greet me when I get home at the end of the day. No, it's not because they know I work the can opener (well, maybe initially that was my big draw); my cats are genuinely happy to see me. They rub my legs and purr, talk to me, and love to be picked up and cuddled a bit when I first walk in the door. Too bad they won't fetch my slippers. Hmm ...

## Closed door = cat challenge.

If you want to drive cats crazy, close off their access to a room in your home. It will drive them bonkers, even if they've never spent any real time in that room. Not counting the door to the outside, of course, I am unable to close any doors in my house, not even to the bathroom. Why? Because my cats will loudly complain and rattle the door so hard that you'd think it was going to come off the hinges. Cats are extremely curious, and the sight of a closed door is a major challenge for them. So when you visit my house, be prepared to see a little feline foot sticking out from under the door if you use our bathroom.



JORGE PEREIRA/SHUTTERSTOCK



# 4

**Cats need interaction.** Many people think cats are solitary creatures that don't need much interaction and can be largely ignored. Nothing could be further from the truth. While it's true that cats do enjoy being on their own for part of the day, if they are repeatedly left alone, they will become depressed. Cats enjoy interaction with us, and many with a feline friend or two as well. They need someone to play with, to cuddle and bond with, and to get into trouble with, too.

MONIKA STEPSHUTTERSTOCK

**Cats can talk.** My cats talk to me all the time. No, I am not hearing voices, but cats definitely express their feelings and vocalize them in many different ways. We all know hisses and growls mean to stay away, and that purring usually means they are relaxed and content. But did you know that cats use meows almost exclusively to "talk" with their humans? Cats rarely use the meow to communicate with one another, except when they are kittens, and feral cats do not meow to one another at all.



LEOBA SHUTTERSTOCK

**Your pants will get covered with fur.** When you come to my house, wear something casual. If my cats like you, they will likely rub against your legs and "mark" you as their own, leaving their fur on your legs as they tell the other kitties you belong to them. Cats mark their territory, be it people or things, by rubbing their faces and bodies along the objects of their affection. Not only does this leave cat hair, of course, but it also leaves a scent that other kitties can detect, which proclaims to all the world that this item (or person) belongs to them. So wear something casual, and maybe avoid wearing black when you come to my house.



MARTIN HAAS SHUTTERSTOCK

## Why Cats Approach the Non-cat Lover in the Room

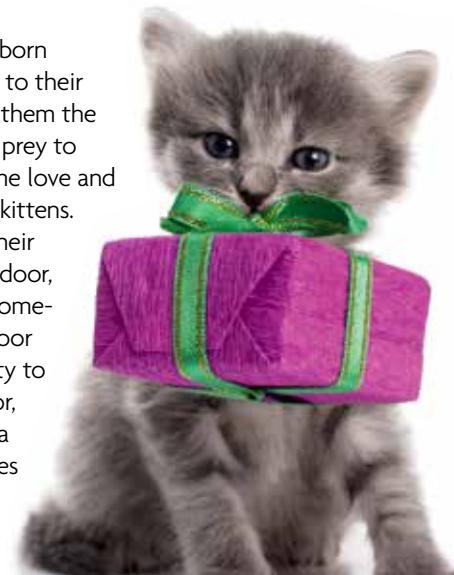
Have you ever heard your non-cat-loving friends complain because they went to a cat person's house and the cat made a beeline for them? They don't understand why this happens when they aren't particularly interested in being near the cat at all.

So just why does this happen? It's simple: A cat usually feels comfortable doing the approaching versus being the one who is approached. I've seen people who love cats rush toward a cat they don't know and get upset when kitty retreats from them. "But I love cats!" the person will exclaim, feeling hurt when the cat goes over to sit by the non-cat lover in the room. The reason the cat ran from them is — with a few exceptions — most cats do not want to be chased and aggressively approached.

As a rule, cats don't like to be pawed over if they don't know you well. A cat will often hide from people who try to get too near before he's had time to assess them from a distance. Immediately rushing over to pet kitty will make him feel "hunted" and vulnerable. In such a situation, the cat will often seek out the person who is ignoring him, viewing that person as a safe haven where he can get away from the person who is trying too hard to touch him. Of course, there are always exceptions; my Punkin LOVES to be fussed over, and he won't let anyone get in the door without properly greeting him first!

The next time you go to someone's house who has a cat, play it safe, and ignore the kitty. Sooner or later, the cat will make his way over to you, and if you play it cool, he may even invite you to pet him.

**Cats bring gifts.** Cats are natural born hunters, bringing home their prey to their offspring for dinner and to teach them the art of hunting. When a cat brings prey to her owner, she is showing the same love and affection she would show to her kittens. Indoor-outdoor cats often take their catch of the day to their owner's door, presenting it with pride to their somewhat bemused human. While indoor cats typically don't have the ability to hunt, they still mimic this behavior, bringing toys and other things as a sign of caring devotion. Sometimes I even find a little ball or catnip toy tucked deep into the toes of my shoes. I think it's my cat Tinkerbelle's way of telling me to have a good day as I put on my shoes to head out the door.



STRUK OLGASHUTTERSTOCK



MARGARITA NIKOLSKAYA SHUTTERSTOCK

**Love me, love my cats.** My cats are as much a part of my life as any of my human friends. So if you love me, you must love my cats as well. Each one is with me for the rest of their lives, and at least one cat will always be living in my household at any given moment. If I had to come home to an empty house, I just don't

know how I would stand the boredom. And if I had to sleep in a bed without a soft purr lullaby, I believe I would have permanent insomnia. Not to mention that a cat makes a great (and absorbent) shoulder to cry on, too.

Cats also have a keen sense of humor. It's true! Have you ever watched a cat jump out and grab someone's ankles as they walked by, or seen him jump on one of his cat buddies or a doggie friend from behind a doorway? I am convinced that cats know what's funny, and mine are a continual source of laughter in our home. Life with cats is never dull, and I am never without a constant supply of laughter, companionship, and unconditional love. My cats are by far the best housemates I could ever wish to have.

So the next time one of your non-cat-owning friends says she just doesn't understand cats, hand her a copy of this article, and tell her just why you love your cats so much. If she's interested, you can even take her to your local shelter to help her find a feline friend of her own. I know she'll thank you for it.



Rita Reimers' cat behavior counseling sessions have helped many kitties remain happy in their forever homes. Visit her website, [thecatanalyst.com](http://thecatanalyst.com), to learn more about her services and to read her cat behavior blog. Rita is also owner/CEO of Just For Cats Pet Sitting; [justforcatspetsitting.com](http://justforcatspetsitting.com). You can connect with Rita on Facebook at [The Cat Analyst](https://www.facebook.com/TheCatAnalyst), and on Twitter at [@thecatanalyst](https://twitter.com/thecatanalyst).