

I'm a new cat owner. I've always had dogs before and knew they loved me. How can I tell if my cat loves me?

Welcome to the wonderful world of cats. They are quite different than dogs and it will take a while until you feel like you understand them. Some cats can be the stereotypical aloof, independent type, while others are gregarious and affectionate. If your cat is following you around and wanting to be with you (even if it isn't dinner time!) that's the first sign that she likes you. There are several other cat specific behaviors that are demonstrations of affection. Some of these actions are related to feline facial pheromones, which are hormones secreted by glands on the side of the cat's face. The cat who is rubbing his face against a person's leg or arm is actually applying their pheromones to the person and claiming the person as theirs. Some cats will do a head butt gesture with you and that is also a sign of affection while releasing their scent through pheromones onto you.

It's common to see cats lovingly grooming each other. A cat who feels close with her human companion will lick them as if grooming, just as dogs lick people. In particular, a cat may lick a person she likes on the person's nose or ear. If you've ever had that pleasure you realize how rough a cat's sandpaper like tongue is. If a cat is purring while she is grooming, licking or rubbing up against you, that is a sure sign she is happy and loving you. A loving cat may also "knead" you, which is an alternating pushing of each front paw into your arm or leg. Cats who knead may have been separated from their mother at too early of an age and continue to show this action as they did to their mother while nursing.

One more subtle clue to watch for is a slow speed blink of the eyes. This is something that cats do to each other as a sign of affection and they may do this when looking at their humans. We teach our veterinary technicians to try to mimic this technique with cats in our hospital who are stressed to help comfort them.

These are just some of the ways you can tell if your cat loves you. Remember, don't think your cat hates you if he doesn't come running at the sound of his name. They aren't like dogs. "Dogs come when they are called; cats take a message and get back to you".

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