

The Difference Between Cats And Dogs

From *Making Animals Happy*

The big difference between cats and dogs is that cats aren't hyper-social. You can't use social approval to train a cat, and cats don't train themselves by picking up on their owners' reactions the way dogs sometimes do. Dogs serve people, but people serve cats.

On the other hand, cats are not solitary, self-sufficient loners the way a lot of people think. Cats have social needs. Unfortunately, we animal behaviourists and ethologists don't know as much about cats and their emotions as we do about other domestic animals. But a lot of what we do know hasn't gotten out to the public.

One of the more important things to realize about cats is that they haven't been domesticated, at least not nearly to the degree dogs have. Wolves started evolving into dogs a hundred thousand years ago. No one knows for sure yet when wild cats started to evolve into domestic cats. The oldest cat remains found in the grave of a human are 9,500 years old. That was after agriculture was invented in some parts of the world, so humans were past the hunter-gatherer stage. They were living in towns and villages when they started to associate with cats. The most popular theory of how cats became domestic animals is that they joined human settlements to prey on rats and mice. Basically they made themselves into pets.

Cats and people could go back a very long way. But even if cats and people have lived together for thousands and thousands of years, cats probably haven't been changed that much by their association with people because cats and humans had a mutualistic relationship instead of the more symbiotic relationship humans and dogs had during domestication. Early humans needed their dogs to guard their camps and help them hunt, and early dogs needed their humans for food and shelter. They depended on each other. With people and cats, it was more a relationship of convenience. Cats killed mice and rats, and humans provided lots of mice and rats to kill since mice and rats lived in human settlements. The two species didn't need each other so much as profit by being around each other.

The result was that today a housecat is a lot closer to a wild cat than a dog is to a wolf. To understand why, you need to know how domestication works. The first wolves who started to live with humans would have been less fearful of humans than other wolves. Those less fearful wolves would have been fed by humans, which would have given them a reproductive advantage over their brother and sister wolves who still had to find all their own food. That created a selection pressure for tameness.



For example, if the slower antelopes are the ones that get eaten by a lion, the faster antelopes will be more successful at breeding and will leave behind more offspring because they live longer. After a few generations, if the slow antelopes keep getting eaten at higher rates than the fast antelopes, overall they'll become faster as a species. Selection pressure is the mechanism through which animals evolve.

Humans who kept wolves would have gotten a reproductive advantage too, because they had wolves guarding them while they slept and helping them hunt. After a few generations, the less fearful wolves would be on the path to becoming domestic dogs, and the humans would probably have been on their way to becoming a species that likes to live with dogs.

Cats would have had less selection pressure to lose their fear of humans than wolves did, partly because the African wild cat, which is the ancestor of the domestic cat, has a lot less fear of humans than wolves do. There have been reports for 150 years of African wild cats living on the edges of villages and of the people in the villages capturing the cats as kittens, taming them, and using them to catch rats and mice. Europeans also wrote about taming wild cats and keeping them to catch rats. The African cat didn't have to change very much to be willing to live as a housecat.

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Cats did change in some ways. All domestic animals have smaller brains than their wild ancestor animals, and domestic cats also have smaller brains than wild cats although we don't know very much about the differences at this point. Domestic animals also undergo pedomorphosis, or neoteny, and adult housecats have three juvenile behaviours: meowing, purring and kneading their paws. Adult wild cats living in zoos don't do these things with humans, although they do purr with other cats. Other than that, cats are less neotenized than other domestic animals, and they can easily go feral and survive. That's not true for dogs, If you put the family Poodle out in the countryside, his chances of surviving are low unless he finds another family to live with. But abandoned cats do fine. They're healthier living with people because they get veterinary care, but they don't need to find another family to survive. They are still adapted to living in the wild and taking care of themselves.

Even without knowing anything about the history of the domestic cat's evolution, you can tell from the cat's appearance and behaviour that cats haven't changed as much as other domestic animals have. In appearance, domesticated animals are much more varied than their wild counterparts. Dogs have huge variability, ranging all the way from tiny toy breeds to Alaskan malamutes. Cats don't come in anything like this kind of variety. They've evolved some different coat colours, but most people looking at photographs of wild African cats wouldn't be able to tell them apart from a standard tabby cat.



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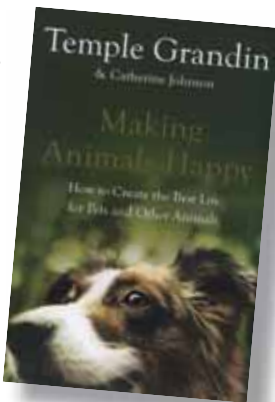
Dogs will give you unconditional love forever. Cats will make you pay for every mistake you've ever made since the day you were born.

One of the reasons why people haven't picked up on cat sociability is that domestic cats aren't totally domesticated the way dogs and horses are. They can go their own way. Quite a few cats do go. A friend of mine told me that her favourite cat when she was growing up, a big, striped tomcat named King, moved to the neighbour's house down the road. They'd see him every once in a while when he came back to visit, but otherwise he stayed with the neighbours. My friend grew up on a farm where all the cats were barn cats, so her parents figured King must have gotten promoted to housecat with his new family. He had a better offer and he took it. A dog would never do that.

Dogs also read humans well. There's a lot of research on that. Cats are completely different, and I think their differences make them difficult for people to read. The hardest thing for people is that cats don't have expressive faces. Humans naturally look at an animal's face to see what it's thinking because people are primates, and primates use their face to communicate. Some anthropologists think facial expressions are more important than words, even. Looking at an animal's face works just fine with a dog, although you need to look at its posture and its tail too. But cats don't signal with their face very much, and they have lots more bodily signals than either dogs or wolves do. So when people look into their cats' faces, they're looking at the wrong place.

Making Animals Happy is a groundbreaking book that gives us an insight into how to provide our animals the best and happiest life - on their terms, not ours.

Whether it's how to make the healthiest environment for the dog that you leave alone in the house during the day, how to keep pigs from being bored, or how to know if the lion pacing in the zoo is miserable or just exercising, Grandin teaches us to challenge our assumptions about animal emotions. *Making Animals Happy* is the culmination of almost 30 years of research, experimentation, and experience. This is essential reading for anyone who's ever owned, cared for, or simply cared about an animal.



Excerpt from *Making Animals Happy - How to Create the Best Life for Pets and Other Animals* by Temple Grandin & Catherine Johnson. Published by Bloomsbury. Available in good bookstores from June 1st. \$35.00



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The Difference Between Cats and Dogs

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Dogs will give you unconditional love forever. Cats will make you pay for every mistake you've ever made since the day you were born.

Dogs will let you give them a bath without taking out a contract on your life.

Dogs will tilt their heads and listen whenever you talk. Cats will yawn and close their eyes.

Dogs will bark to wake you up if the house is on fire. Cats will quietly sneak out the back door.

Dogs will sit, lie down, and heel on command. Cats will smirk and walk away.

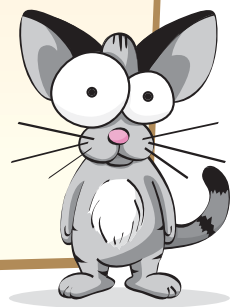
Dogs will bring you your slippers or the evening newspaper. Cats might bring you a dead mouse.

Dogs will greet you and lick your face when you come home from work. Cats will be mad that you went to work at all.

Dogs will play Frisbee with you all afternoon. Cats will take a three-hour nap.

Dogs will sit on the car seat next to you. Cats have to have their own private box or they will not go at all.

Dogs will wriggle because they're happy to see you. Cats get under your feet in the hope of tripping you up.



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