

## 8 Ways You May Accidentally Offend Your Kitty

Many cat owners become frustrated by their cat's rejection of their love and attention. Cuddles and petting are returned with hissing and scratches. If that sounds familiar, here are 8 actions that might put you in the 'doghouse' with your cat, and how to stay on good terms instead.

**Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you can't seem to establish a loving bond with your cat, you might be unintentionally offending him
- Kitties are exquisitely sensitive creatures that thrive on delicate handling and a consistent daily routine. A wrong look or a meal served late can put you in the doghouse with your cat

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If you're owned by a cat, you're sharing your home with a noble, dignified creature. Not only is Mr. Whiskers moody and mysterious, he also very much prefers to live life on his own terms.

Since you can't read his mind, your attempts to bond with your feline companion may have fallen flat, or been met with a twitching tail, hissing, or worse.

If you feel like you and your kitty just aren't connecting, or you can relate to the expression, "Dogs have owners, cats have staff," it could be you're inadvertently offending his delicate sensibilities.

### 8 Ways You May Be Ticking Off Tiger

1. **Stop looking at me!** — Many cats (and also dogs) are tremendously uncomfortable with eye-to-eye contact from their humans. This is because most animals view prolonged eye contact as an act of aggression, and trying to stare down your kitty can make him feel anxious and fearful.

A better approach when gazing at your cat is to close your eyes for a few seconds, then open them and look away, or simply glance away once kitty meets your gaze. This will show him you are not a threat.

2. **Stop touching me!** — Some kitties just don't like to be touched and find the whole petting and stroking thing quite stressful. If your cat initially allows some petting and then suddenly lashes out, it probably means she's tolerating it for a short time, but it's stressing her out.

Your cat may be touch-averse, or it could be you're touching her all wrong. The right way to pet a cat is with

an open hand and a soft gentle stroke, only touching her back, shoulders, neck, and the top of her head – never the paws, tail, or tummy.

3. **Put me down!** — Some cats love to be held and cuddled, but many do not, and some can only tolerate it for brief periods. If Fluffy's tail is flailing about and her ears are flattened, she's had enough – let her go.

The right way to pick up an agreeable cat is with one hand under her chest and the other hand supporting her back legs. Hold her gently against your upper body so that she feels secure. If she pushes away, looks toward the floor, flattens her ears, or twitches her tail, that's your cue to put her down quickly and gently.

4. **I'm not wearing that!** — Some cat guardians just love to dress up Garfield in hats, glasses, bow ties, scarves, sweaters, and even head-to-tail costumes. While you might be endlessly amused by this activity, it's almost certain poor Garfield is not.

Unless your kitty companion is the very rare feline who enjoys playing dress up, or you have a hairless breed that needs a sweater outdoors or during the winter months, chances are you're not winning your cat's heart with all that costuming.

5. **When do I eat?** — Your kitty does best when her daily life as your captive is super consistent, including mealtimes. If you like to sleep in on the weekends, or she can't count on your arrival home at around the same time each day, she'll express her displeasure with loud meowing, at a minimum.

Try to feed your cat at the same time in the morning and again in the evening. I don't recommend free-feeding because it involves biologically inappropriate dry food, and also contributes to obesity in cats.

6. **My bathroom is filthy!** — This is really a no-brainer. Cats are fastidious creatures and most will happily make consistent use of a well-placed, clean litter box. However, if the box is allowed to get dirty and stinky, many cats will eventually eliminate elsewhere. This is especially true for older cats who tend to become even fussier as they age.

If you want to keep kitty content to relieve himself in his litter box, be sure to scoop it at least once a day. A thorough cleaning with soap and warm water, and a complete litter change, should be done once a week, or every two weeks at the outside.

7. **What the heck is THAT?** — If your cat has no experience with dogs and you decide to add one to your family (or foster one, or have one over for a visit), be prepared for some major attitude from Fluffy. Dogs are naturally bigger, louder, and rowdier than cats, and when one enters your kitty's domain, she will not be pleased.

Some guidelines for introducing your cat to a new dog: proceed slowly, make sure kitty has foolproof escape routes from every room, keep the dog on a leash initially, and distract him with toys, treats or other activities if he seems hyper-focused on your cat.

8. **Who the heck is THIS?** — For many cats, only slightly less upsetting than a new dog in the house is a new cat. You might think Miss Kitty needs a friend to pal around with when you're not home, but there's a good chance Miss Kitty will not agree, at least initially.

It's a good idea to set up a semi-private area (outfitted with a litter box, food and water station, toys, and bedding) for the new cat in a spare bedroom or another unused room in your home. The goal is to allow the cats to meet in their own time, on their own terms. You should supervise all interactions until you're confident that both cats are safe and reasonably comfortable with each other.

## Sources and References

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