

What Your Cat Is Trying to Tell You

CatChannel humor columnist Peter Gerstenzang interprets the real meaning behind the meows, chatters and purrs.

By Peter Gerstenzang

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At least once a day, I get the feeling my cat, Gracie, is trying to tell me something. It can be as innocent as "I need you to scratch me." Or as cheeky as "Ugh, that outfit! Who dressed you this morning?"

So, I decided to see if my cat's various sounds really meant something. And if I really did need to take more pains with my appearance. Here's a breakdown of your kitty's noises from the always-dependable Wikipedia. Even if they do insist that Jimmy Hoffa is still alive and running the Teamsters. **MEOW:** According to Wikipedia, the meow is a standard greeting. Meaning "Hi," "Yo," or "How's my peeps?" if your cat is really hip. Lately, though, I've been showing up with presents for Gracie and still getting the standard meow. So, now I have to check Wikipedia for the chapter, "Have Your Cat's Priorities Changed?"

MULTIPLE MEOWS: This is an excited greeting. And might have you saying, "Why didn't you meow like this when I got tendonitis dragging in that new scratching post?" Then, you'll realize, your cat is happy to see you. And isn't just some crass materialist. After you rejoice about your kitty's good values, call the cat store. And find out when you return that new scratching post, if you get credit or cash.

MID-PITCH MEOW: This is a plea for something. But what, no one knows. So, hand kitty her jingly bunny or point her toward the old scratching post and see if either one works. If she wants none of those things, assume your cat's plea is for world peace. And she's a saint. Who deserves a present. So, call the pet store and tell them you won't be returning the scratching post after all. If you feel embarrassed, you can always disguise your voice. Can't decide on whose? Henry Kissinger is always good.

CHATTER: These rapid, teeth-chattering jaw movements are usually expressions of frustration. Like, when a mouse your cat has been stalking has gotten away. Next, you need to figure out if your cat's feeling of frustration is symbolic. Like, is she thinking, "If I can't catch that mouse, what's the point of anything?" This is when you need to tell kitty she's being pretentious. And sometimes a mouse is just a mouse.

THE PURR: For the longest time, I thought this simply meant your cat was happy. Apparently, it can also mean she wants you to pay her attention or come into close contact. What do you do, though, if your cat is purring because she's happy but doesn't want you to get any closer? I've experienced this phenomenon with women on several occasions and the consequences were unsettling. And, as with cats, I've got the scratch marks to prove it. So, let your cat purr. And if you're feeling bold, move in on her. You should be OK. Still, to satisfy my legal counsel, you didn't hear it from me!