

## What Can I Tell About My Cat by Its Tail?

**CatChannel behavior expert Marilyn Krieger, CCBC, discusses cat tail movements as a mood indicator.**

*By Marilyn Krieger*

Posted: June 5, 2009 3:00 a.m. EDT

**Q:** Why does my cat keep her tail extended straight up in the air? Is this an indication of something or does she just like it like that?

**A:** A cat's tail is a very effective communication device. Learn to read a cat's tail and you will have an idea if the cat is approachable or wants to be left alone. Tail positions along with tail movement and the positioning of the fur help indicate the mood the cat is in. Since tails can be viewed from long distances, other cats can gauge the mood of the distant cat based on their tail-mood indicator.

A cat who holds her tail straight up with a slight curve at the top is typically a happy cat in a good mood and is approachable. Sometimes cats will greet their favorite people with their tail up, curved at the top and with the fur at the base of the tail slightly puffed out. Cats who are best buds can sometimes be found sleeping together with one or both of their tails draped or wrapped around each other, indicating a sweet and trusting bond between them.

Avoid approaching cats who are rapidly moving their tails back and forth. A fast-thumping tail is a good indicator that a cat is agitated and should be left alone. Cats with the Halloween-tail look should also be treated with respect. The fur is puffed out and the tail is usually elevated with a curve. It's the cat's way of making herself look larger and a little more fearsome to her opponent.

Cats also use their tail to express feelings of conflict and indecisiveness. A cat who is feeling conflicted will typically move her tail back and forth. The movement isn't as quick, strong or as furtive as the cat who is in a bad mood and shouldn't be approached.

A cat's tail isn't the only indicator of her mood. Along with the tail, the ear positions, eye stares, vocalizations, body and fur positions help project a cat's emotions and mood to everyone around her.