

Dear Tabby

**Experts answer your kitten's questions in terms that humans can understand.**

*Marty Becker, DVM, and Janice Willard, DVM*

In the end, like your human family popping gum, twirling hair, biting fingernails or lips or cracking their knuckles, it's really not hurting anyone or anything, including you.

My humans have given me interesting food in a bowl to eat. But there are a lot of things to taste in my home like houseplants and string. How do I learn what I should and shouldn't eat?

The best way to know which food to eat is to watch your mommy. Whatever you observe your mommy eating, you will have as a dietary preference. This even includes what prey you prefer to hunt if your mother is a hunter. In the wild, she would bring you killed prey, mice and such, for you to chew on and learn what to hunt. But if humans adopt you, you likely enter their houses at the same age when you are exploring new food sources. So rubber bands, string... you name it, you'll try it. Who knows, that yarn might be a really thin mouse in disguise. The safest thing for you now is to limit your access to experimental dining by having your owners keep you in a smaller area where they can keep a closer eye on what goes in your mouth.

My sister hardly peeps, but my nickname is Motor Mouth. I even have a shirt that says, "Help, I'm Meowing and I Can't Shut Up!" Why do I squawk more than she does?

That depends on why you are squawking. If you are cold, hungry, or lost, squawking is a way to bring Mommy to help you. In fact, your calls in those circumstances are each different and your mommy can most likely identify your concerns. Once in a human home, you learned that meowing still gets attention. That's the way the world works: Babies cry. Babies get picked up. Babies get babied. Just like two-legged kids, some kittens are extroverts and like a lot of attention. It sounds like you are one of those and your sister is more self-contained. In fact, your sister may have learned to conserve her energy and let you do all the talking. Your vociferous personality is like a talented theater headliner who thrills audiences while your quieter sister prefers doing props backstage.