

Dear Tabby

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

Marty Becker, DVM, and Janice Willard, DVM

In a word, cats are captivating. They amaze us with their athleticism, puzzle us with their independence and intrigue us with their quirks. If adult cats can be described as mysterious by nature, then kittens combine that with wide-eyed innocence, comic playfulness, toxic cuteness and an embrace of all that is interesting in the world. Behind the dancing, liquid eyes of a kitten lies a brain abuzz with new thoughts, marinating in old patterns of behavior from millennia past. Like code talkers, we decided to ask these endearing little furballs if they have any questions about why they do what they do. We can't really say that we sat down with them to have a conversation. When not sleeping, kittens don't stay in any one place for very long. But they did zip by with a question from time to time.

I don't even like watching football on TV, but occasionally I feel like butting my head right into humans. Am I hardheaded or is this normal?

Head butting is a friendly greeting for members of your extended family. It's the feline equivalent of shaking hands or giving Hollywood pecks on the cheek. Not only does it signal recognition, but you leave behind your scent from scent glands on your head and cheeks. That is actually a badge of honor because you are marking humans as though they were members of your family, and I can think of few greater compliments than to be recognized as an honorary cat.

Counters, shelves and windowsills: What's with my love of high altitudes?

Cats are predators, but can also be prey. This is particularly true for small kittens. So having escape routes, in dens or trees, is a well-engrained cat survival plan. "Many of your wild ancestors spent much of their leisure time in high places, perhaps tree branches or high rocks or precipices," said cat breeder Elizabeth Hodgkins, DVM. "A high vantage point allows the predator (you and your ancestors) to locate prey, while at the same time high, inaccessible spots allow cats, big and small, to remove themselves from the sight and reach of enemies. Even though you don't have to catch your own food or stay away from predators in a human home, you still love to be above your world, silently taking it all in as though you were a big, ferocious wildcat."