

The Truth About Cats: Are They Really Domesticated? (C1)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. What are the most popular house pets in your country?
2. How do cats and dogs compare as pets, in your opinion?
3. Have you ever had a pet? If so, what was it?

B – Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and choose the correct answer.

1. Domestic cats are
 - a) very different from their wild ancestors.
 - b) very similar to their wild ancestors.
 - c) more similar to the wild ancestors of dogs.
2. Studies have shown that
 - a) cats without owners, living in groups, usually communicate with other cats by meowing.
 - b) only domestic cats meow.
 - c) all small members of the cat family meow, whether wild or domestic.
3. The author's cat, Nelson,
 - a) is allowed out in the garden on its own.
 - b) is always kept inside the house.
 - c) is allowed to roam anywhere in the neighbourhood.
4. When cats raise their tails up straight in the air, it's
 - a) a warning.
 - b) a greeting.
 - c) a sign of fear.
5. The author thinks that cats are
 - a) solitary and asocial.
 - b) only unfriendly to other female cats
 - c) sociable, like lions.
6. The author says
 - a) he has trained his cat to carry its toys to him.
 - b) his cat throws its toys across the room when it's annoyed.
 - c) his cat has a way of telling him when it wants to play.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. How do domestic cats' bodies differ from those of their ancestors?
2. How have they modified their meow to make it more pleasing to humans?
3. What adaptation has taken place in how cats purr? Why?
4. What difference is there in the way domestic cats and lions use their tails as a friendly greeting?
5. How does the author explain the fact that tail-signalling evolved both in cats and in lions?
6. Why is using the tail a good way of signalling friendly intentions?
7. What are cats sometimes thought to do if left alone with their dead owner?
8. How does the author refute this claim?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense.)

1. The library closed while I was still in it. I was _____ and had to call the police.
2. You can remove dark stains from wooden furniture by _____ the surface gently with vinegar.
3. The cat began _____ around a hole in the floor. I think it could smell a mouse.
4. Joe _____ his phone on the floor and broke the screen.
5. Chloe had changed so much since I last saw her that I _____ recognised her.
6. James took his car to the mechanic yesterday morning and went to _____ it after work.

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test? (Reading and Use of English, Part 4)

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. Use between 3 and 6 words including the word given.

Example: Cats have changed so little.

HOW That's *how little cats have* changed.

1. Most people would be able to distinguish a wolf from a dog.

MISTAKE Few people would _____ a dog.

2. Researchers suggest that humans innately prefer high-pitched sounds.

HAVE Researchers suggest that _____ high-pitched sounds.

3. The core of a lion pride consist of females who are all related.

WHOM The core of a lion pride is made up of females, _____ related.

4. People think domestic cats and other felines are alike.

THOUGHT Domestic cats _____ other felines.

5. Cats are frequently unfriendly to each other if they are from different families.

ALONG Cats _____ with each other if they are from different families.

6. It's possible that the domestic cat has not evolved much from the African wildcat.

MAY The domestic cat _____ from the African wildcat.

F – Talk about it

In pairs or groups.

1. Do many households in your country have a pet?
2. What are the advantages/disadvantages of having a pet, in your opinion?
3. Some people say cat lovers tend to be sensitive, intuitive and introverted, whereas dog lovers tend to be sporty, sociable and extroverted. Do you agree? Why (not)?

Answers

B – Listen and answer

1. b 2. c 3. a 4. b 5. c 6. c

C – Read and answer

1. Domestic cats have longer intestines and smaller brains than those of their ancestors. 2. They have made it shorter and higher-pitched. 3. Their purr has been adapted to resemble a human baby's cry, in order to manipulate their owners and get what they want. 4. Domestic cats raise their tails like an exclamation point, while lions raise theirs in a curved semi-circle. 5. He says unowned cats and lions live in similar social structures made up of related females that are sociable and cooperative. 6. Because the tail is visible at a distance and is not used for other purposes. 7. They are sometimes thought to eat their owner. 8. He says research shows this happens more often with dogs than with cats.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. locked in 2. rubbing 3. sniffing 4. dropped 5. barely 6. fetch

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test?

1. mistake a wolf for 2. humans have an innate preference for 3. all of whom are 4. are thought to be like 5. frequently don't get along 6. may not have evolved much