

Appendix 16

Friend or Foe

Close social bonds can and do occur between cats, but not all cats that live together get along well with each other. Fighting is a clear sign that they are enemies but fighting can easily be misinterpreted as play, and even when there is no clear evidence of antagonism between them, this still does not indicate that they are friends.

Signs of a Friendly Relationship

- Grooming each other.
- Greeting each other by touching noses and with raised tails.
- Rubbing against each other.
- Wanting to be with each other.
- Sleeping curled up together.
- Playing together.

Signs of play

- Chasing each other equally and swapping roles.
- Claws remain retracted and bites are inhibited.
- No or very little vocalization.
- Following play the cats want to remain close to each other.

Signs of a Bad Relationship

- Trying to avoid each other:
 - Sleeping or resting in different rooms or in different areas of the same room.
 - Walking out of a room when the other cat walks in.
 - Jumping up onto furniture to avoid crossing paths.
 - Eating, sleeping or using a litter tray when the other cat is not around.
 - Spending more time outside when the other cat is inside.
- Guarding or blocking the other cat's access to important resources.
- Hissing, swiping, chasing or fighting.

Signs of fighting

- One cat is more likely to chase or ‘pick on’ the other.
- Claws are more likely to be extended and bites less inhibited.
- Hissing, growling and/or ‘shrieking’.

Signs of a ‘Tolerant’ Relationship

There is another form of relationship between cats whereby they are not friends but they are able to tolerate each other. A human equivalent is rather like house sharing with someone who pays half of the rent but who is not a friend or family. The signs are:

- Few, if any, signs of a friendly relationship; unlikely to mutually groom or rub against each other.
- May occasionally greet each other in an amicable way.
- May share favourite resting areas but without touching each other.
- They do not make any great efforts to avoid each other but do not actively seek each other out either.

See ‘Friend or Foe?’, a video available from Cats Protection (<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=bPqreEUV5vM>).

© Trudi Atkinson.

This appendix is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)