



CLASSIFYING CATS BY COLOR & PATTERN

Kit Jenkins, *Understanding Animals*

Why should you bother to classify each cat with specific physical descriptions? To more accurately track individual cats and kittens (by database or by hand) for simpler record-keeping and consistent descriptions for identification -- especially those who came to you in multiples or litters. Also, those cats and kittens with no history might have owners looking for them.

COLOR COMBINATIONS

Name the primary color FIRST. This is especially helpful in describing littermates. For example:

- a BLACK AND WHITE cat has more black than white
- a WHITE AND BLACK cat has more white than black
- a BROWN TABBY AND WHITE cat has more stripes than white
- a WHITE AND BROWN TABBY cat has more white than stripes

If there are obvious markings, note them. Those used most frequently include those on the legs, feet, and tail:

- toes
- feet
- tail
- tail tip
- socks (from the ankle down)
- stockings (from the hock down)

and those on the head and face:

- mustache or half mustache
- chin or entire face
- ear or ears
- blaze (stripe between the ears and down to the nose)
- star (much smaller, usually a dot between the ears)
- mask (most of the face, especially from just above the eyes and down to just above the mouth)

A cat may have a “splash” on the head, neck, back, or tail of various sizes (a quarter, a dime, etc.)

PATTERNS

Tabby patterns are stripes (sometimes with spots intermingled) on a lighter background.

- Brown tabby = brown background with black or dark brown stripes
- Black tabby (sometimes called “shadow” tabby) = black with black stripes
- Gray tabby = gray background with black or dark gray stripes
- Red tabby = buff background with clear, red stripes
- Orange tabby = buff background with lighter, orange stripes (not “accepted” by cat fanciers)
- Buff tabby = buff background with darker buff stripes
- Silver tabby = bright silver background with clear, black stripes (very striking; NOT a gray tabby)
- Calico = splashes of white, red, and black (often primarily white)

- Pastel or Diluted Calico = splashes of white, buff, and gray (as if faded)
- Tortoiseshell = intertwined black and red (NO white)
- Pastel or Diluted Tortoiseshell = intertwined gray and buff (NO white)
- Tabby Tortie (or “torbie” or “patched tabby”) = tortoiseshell with tabby overmarkings, usually black

Pointed patterns are solid backgrounds with colored “points”: nose, ears, tail, feet, testicles. The entire body darkens with age.

- Seal point = buff body with dark brown points – dark leathers
- Chocolate point = buff body with lighter brown points – pink leathers
- Blue point = off-white body with gray-blue points – dark leathers
- Lilac point = off-white body with pale blue points – pink leathers
- Flame point = buff body with red points or red tabby points
- Tortie point = buff body with tortoiseshell points
- Lynx point = (usually) buff body with tabby points, generally blue or flame. SO...lynx points need two indicators: color and point. For example, blue lynx point or flame lynx point.

Agouti patterns, also called “ticked”, are usually found in Abyssinians but can show up in shorthaired mixed-breed cats – generally with a tabby pattern as well. Each individual hair is dotted with different colors, creating the ticked effect – very much like that seen in squirrels. In classifying the cat, however, be sure to identify a color along with the “agouti” pattern.

- Ruddy agouti = reddish brown coat with an overall rust effect (most common)
- Blue agouti = grayish buff coat with an overall blue effect

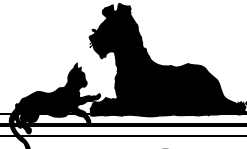
Shaded cats (almost always longhaired) achieve their dramatic effect because each individual hair is darkest at the root and lightest at the tip, varying gradually up the shaft. When you lay the coat backwards, the darkest color will look solid – as if the dye job needs to be touched up! For example:

- Shaded silver = shaded black to pale silver with an overall silvery effect (most common)
- Shaded brown = shaded dark brown to buff with an overall light brown effect

“Tipped” patterns are the opposite of “shaded”, as each hair is lightest at the root and darkest at the tip. The most common shade is Silver-tipped, shading silver to black with an overall “frosted” effect.

Solid colors can come in almost any shade. Here are some rules of thumb about the more difficult to classify:

- Buff = pale shades in the tan family, not yellow and not brown
- Brown = actually is usually dark chocolate to pale milk chocolate in color and technically should be referred to as “chocolate” rather than “brown”
- Yellow = the lightest of the “red” family; not recognized by the purebred world, but we certainly see them in shelters
- Orange = darker than yellow, lighter than red; also not recognized by the purebred world
- Red = darker than orange and very clearly RED (like the difference between a red-headed person who is a “carrot top”, which is orange, or a shade of actual red)

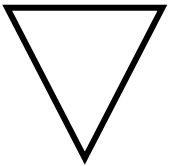


HINTS TO PERSONALITIES & NEEDS IN CATS: THE ABCs OF BODY TYPES

Kit Jenkins, *Understanding Animals*

It is relatively simple to predict the general personalities and needs of dogs, based on the purpose for which their breed was originated, the specific bloodline, and the individual's age and experiences. We have no specific "jobs" for which different kinds of cats were bred, so it is much more difficult to predict their personality tendencies. We see mostly mixed breed cats in shelters, but they are certainly not all alike. Especially since few cats show their complete and true selves in the shelter environment, this "body type" theory can be a helpful tool to make good adoption matches. Not every cat will fit into one of these categories. However, those who display the obvious physical characteristics listed are likely to fit the personality tendencies as well.

NOTE: This is a theory based on the observation of over 150,000 mixed breed cats I have personally handled and also the study of purebred cats.

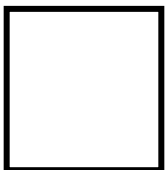


A – THE TRIANGLE CAT

What to look for: Long and lanky, these cats are built of POINTS. They have obviously triangular faces and ears. They can be of any color, including the pointed patterns. Their tails, legs, and bodies may be so long as to seem to be stretched out of proportion. The oriental purebred cats, like Siamese and Oriental Shorthairs, are the ultimate triangle cats, although with even more exaggerated bodies.

How they behave: These cats are intelligent, curious, inventive, athletic, and busy: like almost all cats, but multiplied by 10! They are the herding dogs of the cat world, and will rule the household, open doors, redecorate, dominate every species, and love with fierce loyalty and demonstrative affection. Often that relationship is limited to one or two people – not an equal-opportunity cat.

What they need: Triangle cats need plenty to do with their minds and their bodies. Toys and interactive games that challenge their busy brains are VITAL. They should have their toys switched out frequently. They are extremely vocal. They generally don't do well with other dominant animals; they need to rule the roost at every level. They need continuity and routine, or they will feel that things are out of their control. If they feel unsettled, they tend to "act out" by marking territory, objects, and their primary people. They DO NOT deal well with transitions.



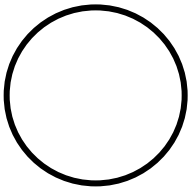
B – THE SQUARE CAT

What to look for: Often quite large, these cats are built of BLOCKS. They have obviously squared-off faces, noses, and ears. They can be of any color and are often longhaired. Their bodies, tails, and legs are also square and blocky, with large feet and

very subtle ankles. Among the purebred cats, the Maine Coon and the American Shorthair are the ultimate square cat bodies.

How they behave: Square cats are intelligent, curious, playful, and very social. Some people might consider them quite “dog-like” in the ways they interact with (and seek affection from) anybody and everybody. They tend to be everyone’s buddy – the retrievers of the cat world -- and want everyone to get along together. They generally do well with almost any other animal in the household, unless they are extra-dominant individuals and the others won’t be dominated. They demonstrate their affection with lots of touching and interactive play. They are often talkers -- not vocal to the extent of triangle cats, but adding frequent chirps of commentary to conversation and activities.

What they need: Square cats need toys and friends; they can become lonely if left alone too much without a person or favorite animal buddy. They are very toy-oriented, but primarily with interactive toys they can share. Tension or unpredictable routines can make them feel that things aren’t “right”. If they feel unsettled, they may become vocal and needy. They handle transitions fairly well (for cats) as long as they have the reassurance of familiar people-smells and, ideally, interactive time with those people.



C – THE ROUND CAT

What to look for: Round all over, these cats are built of CIRCLES. They have obviously circular feet, faces, heads, and ears. Their tails, bodies, and legs are short and sturdy, with gentle curves instead of angles. They can be of any color, including the pointed patterns, and are often longhaired. If they have long hair, they usually have the Persian-type coat – soft and easily matted. The Persian and the Exotic Shorthair are the purebreds who best exemplify the round cat.

How they behave: HAPPY round cats tend to be mellow, content, quiet, and very affectionate. They are happy to cuddle with the people and animals they trust (usually a chosen few). UNHAPPY round cats can be very fearful, skittish, confused, and difficult to teach. They may spend all of their time hiding. Round cats don’t feel safe with strangers, new things, or changes of any kind.

What they need: Round cats thrive on routine, calm, continuity, and feeling safe. They need to know what to expect and who they can trust absolutely. They need toys, as do all pets, but generally have a low energy level and need reliably safe places more than anything else. Because of their low-key lifestyle, interactive play should be encouraged for exercise. They are the least likely of cats to play independently (after kittenhood). If they feel unsettled, they tend to “act out” by urinating on things or places they associate with their primary people (often beds and sofas). They DO NOT deal well with transitions.

These handouts, as well as the complete set of Powerpoint slides for this presentation, are available via email by request.

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