

4-H CAT FITTING AND SHOWING



**Developed by
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FITTING

Fitting refers to the selection of a cat for show, and the care of that animal to enhance its condition and appearance. Fitting also includes any preparation of the cat before the contest, such as checking for ear mites, trimming the toenails, and cleaning the fur.

SELECTING A CAT

When you start the cat project, choosing a cat is a very important decision. There are many cat breeds to choose from. Your 4-H leader can help you decide which breed is the best for you. It's a good idea for a beginning member to choose a small or medium-sized cat rather than a large cat. This is because it can be very frustrating for a beginning 4-H member to handle a large cat during the examination section of showmanship. Emphasis is on how well you work with the animal to demonstrate your knowledge and ability in the handling skills.

When selecting an animal, it's important to choose a cat older than four months, as most shows only allow kittens and cats that have been vaccinated for rabies. Either sex can be used in the contest. Obviously pregnant cats are normally not allowed to show. Check with your show superintendent to see how long you must own the cat to be eligible to show.

CARING FOR CAT

Once you decide which cat to enter into the contest, it's important to give special attention to feeding and caring for the cat. You may need to give special attention to socializing the cat to other pets in the home.

To prepare for showmanship, handle the cat often and expose it to other people, cats, and travel. Give it quality food and fresh, clean water regularly.

If your cat has a minor disease problem (such as ear mites), treat it immediately so that the problem is completely gone by the time of the show.

While cats take care of grooming mostly by themselves, it is necessary to bathe the cat at least on a quarterly annual basis. Special attention may also need to be given to the cat's teeth, including brushing. Within a day of showing, the cat's toenails **MUST** be clipped for the safety of the handler and judge. Be careful not to cut too close or the nail will bleed and stain the cat's fur. Your cat should be an appropriate weight for its size.

Select a ventilated carrier suitable for your cat's size that can be used for transport to show locations.

The cat's harness must fit well, it should be unable to slip off, but not tight enough to cause discomfort to the cat. The harness and leash should be clean.



PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

Your appearance is a very significant part of your presentation. Clothing should be neat and clean, and normally include long pants (no denim), light-colored long-sleeved shirt or blouse, and shoes (no sandals or open toe shoes). Your hair should be neatly combed and long hair tied back to avoid blocking the judge's view of the cat. Your face and hands should be clean. Fingernails should be clean, neatly trimmed, and have no colored polish. If you wear a tie, secure it. Jewelry, other than simple earring posts, should not be worn. Do not chew gum. (A neat and clean appearance is worth 10 points in the judging evaluation.) Consult your county rules to determine other requirements.

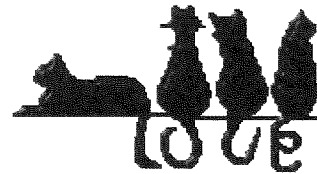
Showmanship is exhibiting an animal in a manner that highlights the animal and demonstrates the exhibitor's knowledge and skills. Showmanship doesn't start the week of the show; you should practice techniques weeks before the show. Socialize your cat so that on the day of show, your cat doesn't hiss, claw, growl, or bite. In addition to your skill and knowledge, the judge will also be evaluating your care and training of the cat.

Most contests allow both household and purebred cats. If you enter a purebred cat, be prepared to answer questions about the breed standards for your cat and how your cat fits those standards.

The American Cat Fanciers Association and the TICA Organization offer information about cat breeds and standards. 4-H showmanship guidelines govern the rules of 4-H showmanship.

In cat breed class, the cats are judged, rather than the exhibitor.

In a fitting and showing contest, the judge evaluates the exhibitor on the skills they demonstrate and their general knowledge of cats. The judge also considers each participant's preparation, attitude, and behavior.



SHOWMANSHIP

Cat showmanship reflects an exhibitor's speaking abilities, presentation skills, and knowledge of cats. It is a dialogue exchange - judges like to hear participants speak about their cat as they go through the showmanship steps and when they present during breed class.

Constant chatting can be annoying, but clear verbal communication can be advantageous.

Showmanship begins when the steward asks you to bring your cat forward to the assigned area for judging. When you are called, put the harness and leash on the cat and loop the end of the leash over the wrist of one arm throughout the judging. Hold your cat in the safety carry and approach the judge.

(Figure 1)

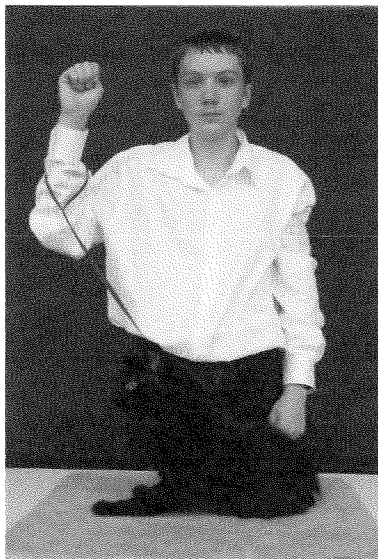


Figure 1 – Leash on Wrist

Control of the cat during presentation is critical for showing and safety. Keeping the leash on your wrist is a crucial part of this control so that the cat cannot escape if it leaves the judging table. Exhibitor should be alert to their cat at all times, using firm but thoughtful hands to control and present their animal. In the event your cat is completely out-of-control, making it a safety issue for the cat, exhibitor, or judge, you may ask the judge if you can substitute another cat. It is the judge's discretion to allow a substitute.

In the safety carry, you grasp the cat's forelegs between your thumb and fingers with at least one finger between the cat's legs. Figure 2 shows a fidgety cat with only one foreleg in the safety carry – the handler should hold *both* legs in the safety carry. Then, you may either tuck the cat's rump and rear legs under your elbow against your body or riding on your hip, with your opposite hand grasping the nape of the cat's neck. It is also allowed that you may hold the cat's rear legs in the same manner as the forelegs. (Figure 2)



Figure 2 – Safety Carry

Presentation

Showmanship of the cat focuses on the breed standards of the animal, including head structure, body structure, and coat.

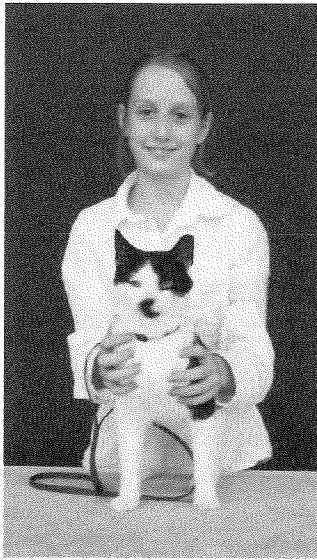


Figure 3 – Pose

When you arrive at the table, pose your cat either sitting or lying between you and the judge facing the judge. (Figure 3) Be sure the cat is comfortable in the position before starting your presentation. The table height may require you to bend over to inspect the cat, but try to stand as straight as you can and look the judge in the eye when speaking.

After positioning the cat, introduce yourself by first name only and your cat by name. Identify the cat by breed; if the cat is not a purebred, identify by long-hair or short-hair domestic. There are four steps to presentation: 1) Head, 2) Body, 3) Tail, and 4) Coat Texture.

Head. Use your hands to demonstrate the shape of the cat's head – either long or round. Most cats, other than Exotic Shorthairs and Persians, will normally have long faces. To present a long face, shape your hands in a triangle around cat's head; for a round face, shape your hands in a circle around cat's head. (Figure 4-Long Face; Figure 5 – Round Face)

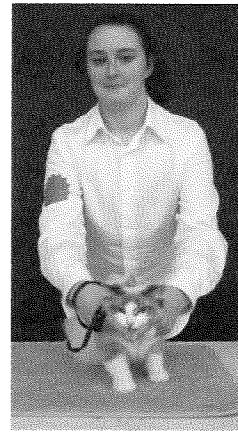


Figure 4 – Long Face

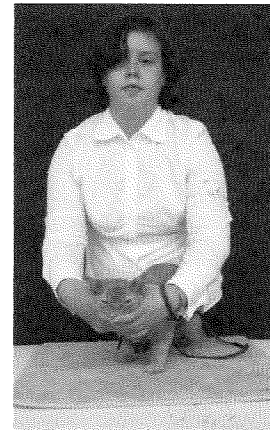


Figure 5 – Round Face

Body. Show the cat's body length – either long or cobby (short). You have three ways you may demonstrate body length:

1. Leave all feet on the table, stand the cat, and square the cat up for a cobby body;
2. Lift the cat's front feet off the table, leaving the back feet on the table for a long body (Figure 6); or
3. Lift the cat completely off the table stretching the body, with hands under the front legs on the chest and in front of the back legs around the stomach area for a long body. (Figure 7)

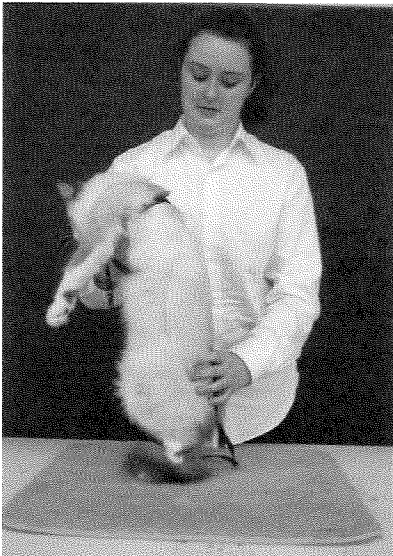


Figure 6 – Body Position 2



Figure 7 – Body Position 3

Tail. Show the cat's tail. While the cat is standing or laying, use the hand closest to the tail to extend the tail to its full length. Tell the judge what length tail your cat has in comparison to its body length – short, medium, or long. (Figure 8) If your cat has a very short or no tail, use the forefinger of the hand closest to the cat to slightly lift whatever tail exists, explaining the length.

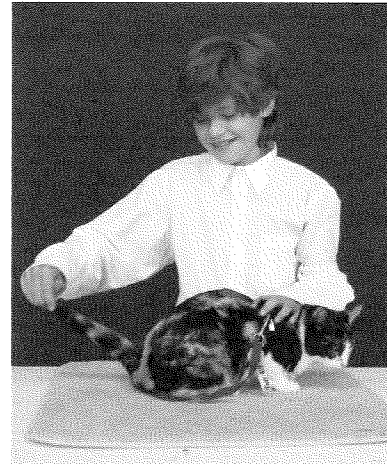


Figure 8 – Long Tail

Coat Texture. Show the cat's coat texture and describe what coat texture, pattern, and markings appear on the cat. Position the cat with its side to the judge, run your hand against the lay of the coat and then back down the body to smooth it down. This would be the time to describe and identify a variety of patterns, textures, and markings, including: color, wave/wire texture, short/long fur length, tabby markings (mackerel, classic, bracelets, mascara lines, necklaces, marbling), shading level (tipped, shaded, smoke, ticked), and spotting.

Examination

In this portion of the showmanship, the judge is determining the exhibitor's knowledge of cats. It provides an animal science component to review the cat for health issues. Again, it is important that you look both at the cat and the judge as you examine the cat. Talk through each step of the examination – telling the judge what area of the body you are inspecting, why you are inspecting it, what you are looking for, and if your cat meets the health standards in this area. If the cat does not meet a health standard, be sure to point it out to the judge and indicate what measures are being taken to correct the situation. Be sure to speak loud enough that the judge can hear you so that you receive credit for completing all parts of the inspection. There are seven steps to the examination, followed by a question and answer session.



Figure 9 – Pose

Step 1, Position: Position the cat between you and the judge, facing the judge. Be sure the cat is comfortable in the position before starting your examination. (Figure 9)

Start with an examination of the cat's head first. It is easiest to remember starting at the front with the teeth and moving up until you reach the ears. When showing body parts that are two sided, always start with the right side first so you remember that you've completed showing both sides.



Figure 10 – Teeth/Gums

Step 2, Mouth: Show the cat's teeth and gums. Hold the cat's lower jaw in one hand and the upper jaw in the other hand. Open the cat's mouth gently, slightly peeling the lips back if necessary. (Figure 10) The purpose of looking inside the cat's mouth is to assess the level of tooth tartar and signs of gum disease. Be sure to show both sides of the mouth, starting with the right side. A healthy cat will have no tartar or gum

disease and the participant will verbally indicate to the judge that the “cat has no tartar or gum disease”. If the cat shows signs of tartar or gum disease, exhibitor should tell the judge what conditions exist and describe what steps are being taken to correct the medical condition.

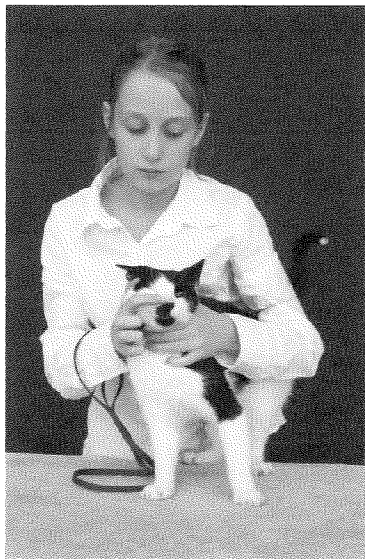


Figure 11 - Nose

Step 3, Nose: Show the cat’s nose by peering inside each nostril, starting with the right nostril. The purpose is to show that the nose is clean of discharge (please don’t use the words snot or boogers). Exhibitor should point to the nostril they are inspecting so the judge will know what they are looking at. It is not necessary to tap the cat’s nose or insert a finger into the cat’s nostril. (Figure 11) A healthy cat will have a clean nose, free of discharge, and exhibitor will verbally indicate to the judge that the “cat’s nose is clear”. If the cat’s nose is not clear, exhibitor should tell the judge what conditions exist and describe what steps are being taken to correct the medical condition.

Step 4, Eyes: Show the cat’s eyes by taking your thumb and forefinger and slightly opening the cat’s eye, peering into each eye, starting with the right eye. The purpose is to show that the eyes are free of discharge and injury. The eyes should be clear and moist. Do not poke the cat in the eye. (Figures 12 and 13) A healthy cat will have clear and bright eyes, free of discharge and injury, and exhibitor will verbally indicate to the judge that the “cat’s eyes are bright and clean”. If the cat’s eyes are not clear, exhibitor should tell the judge what conditions exist and describe what steps are being taken to correct the medical condition.

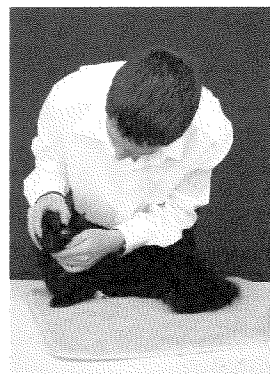


Figure 12 - Eyes

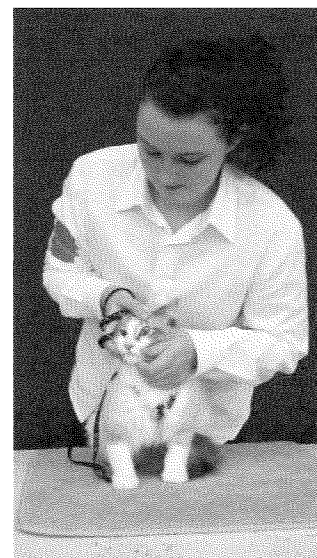


Figure 13 - Eyes



Figure 14 - Ears

Step 5, Ears: Show the cat's ears by slightly bending back each ear and looking inside the ear, starting with the right ear. The purpose is to show that the ears are free of mites, wax, and dirt. Exhibitors should explain to the judge what they are looking for. It is not necessary to stick your finger into the cat's ears. (Figure 14) A healthy cat's ears will be free of parasites, wax, and dirt.

Exhibitor will verbally indicate to the judge that the "cat's ears are free of mites, wax, and dirt". If the cat's ears are not clean, exhibitor should tell the judge what conditions exist and describe what steps are being taken to correct the medical condition. Evidence of mites will probably disqualify the cat from the show.

Step 6, Paws and Claws: Show the cat's claws, starting with the right front paw. The purpose is to show that the cat has all of its claws and that they have been clipped. If the cat has been declawed, that is acceptable and the exhibitor should verbally indicate that to the judge as they look at each paw. Exhibitor should slide their hand down over the shoulder or leg, grasping the paw and gently squeezing it to show the clipped claws. If the cat's claws have not been clipped, they may be marked down substantially as this is a safety issue for the cat, handler, and judge. Repeat presentation of the claws on all four paws, in this order: right front, left front, back right, and back left. (Figure 15) Exhibitor will verbally indicate to the judge that the "cat's claws have been clipped" during the presentation of each paw. Do NOT declaw your cat for 4-H, as many cat organizations will not allow a cat to be shown if it is declawed.

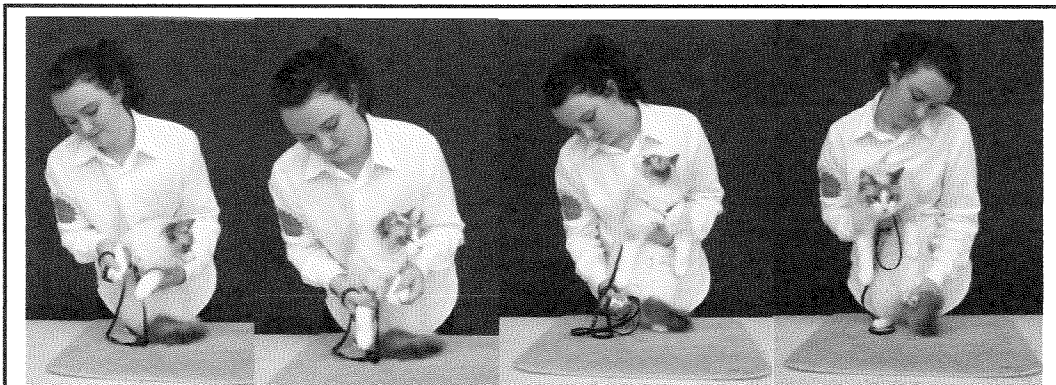


Figure 15 - Showing all four paws, starting from front right to front left. Finish with back right and back left.

Step 7, Grooming: Show the cleanliness of the cat resulting from proper grooming. Lift the cat's front feet off the table, leaving the back feet on the table, with the cat's stomach facing the judge. Run your hand against the lay of the coat and then back down the stomach to smooth it down. The purpose of this examination is to show that the cat is free from dirt, dandruff, and external parasites and there is no coat matting, particularly in the belly and elbow pocket areas. If the cat has external parasites, it will probably disqualify the cat from the show. (Figure 16)

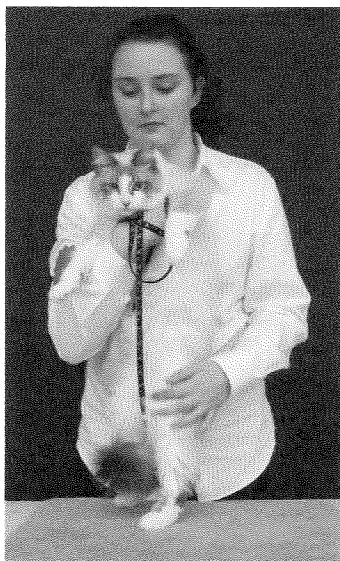


Figure 16 - Grooming

A healthy cat's coat should be free from fleas, ticks, and matting. Exhibitor will verbally indicate to the judge that the "cat is free from fleas, ticks, and matting".

Question. The exhibitor will answer an animal science cat question. Reposition your cat between you and the judge, with the cat facing the judge. Be sure the cat is

comfortable in the position before looking to the judge to answer your question. It is important that you stand tall, look the judge in the eye, and use a confident voice to answer the judge's question(s). Do your best to answer the question, repeating it out loud if it will help give you more time to prepare an answer. If you cannot think of an answer, do not panic; instead, confidently tell the judge that you don't know the answer but will be sure to research it following the show. Questions will most likely be age specific with harder questions about breeding and anatomy reserved for older exhibitors. Exhibitors in the same showmanship age division will usually be given the same question. The number of questions the judge asks will depend on the age division, time available, and number of exhibitors. Remember to keep the cat under control during the question/answer session. Exhibitors should research cats independently, as well as consult 4-H cat manuals and resources.

STUDY IDEAS

- Solid/Parti- Coat Colors
- Tabby Markings
- Purebred Cat Breeds
- Grooming
- Nutrition
- Vaccinations
- Cat History
- Reproduction/Life Cycle
- Cat Equipment
- Nail Care/Declawing
- First Aid
- Common Diseases/ID of Illness
- Poisonous Plants/Foods
- Parasites
- Identification of Body Parts

After the judge releases you, take your cat in the safety carry, and return to your benching area. Stay in the area until the steward releases you from the show area; there could be a time when exhibitors are called back to the judging area for tie breaking questions.

Be sure to put your cat back into its container so that it can rest. Offer water and an opportunity to use the litter box.

If you are called back for a run-off, it could be with or without the cat. Don't overlook last minute grooming items, such as eye discharge, combing, and brushing. At this level of competition, even small flaws can make a huge difference in placements.

SCORE CARD – 100 POINTS	
	Possible Points
<u>Showmanship</u>	
Member Appearance (Neat/Clean)	10
Member Attentive	5
Member Courteous	5
Control of Cat/Leash on Wrist	10
Well Fitting Harness	5
<u>Presentation</u>	
Showing Head and Body	15
Showing Tail and Coat Texture	5
<u>Examination</u>	
Teeth (Tartar, Gum Disease)	5
Nose (No Discharge, Clear)	5
Eyes (No Discharge, Bright, Clean)	5
Ears (No Dirt, Wax, Mites)	5
Nails (Clipped)	5
Grooming (No Parasites, Matting)	5
<u>Animal Science Question(s)</u>	15

Special Thanks for Material Review to:

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Participating 4-H Models:

*Daniel Baljeu and Cat Onyx
Iris deFinta and Cats Buckaro Bonzai and Cairo
Kaitlyn Baljeu and Cat Sam
Ashley Frie and Cat Stormy
Brenden Leftwich and Cat Runtley*