

Cats vs. Dogs

The cutest battle ever

By [Justin O'Neill](#)

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It's on: the ultimate pet showdown, a battle between dogs and cats. Sure, they're both adorable. Yes, they're both cuddly. But which one makes the best pet? Are dogs really top dog? Are cats really, er, the cat's meow?

PUPPY LOVE

More than half of American families have one or the other, but dogs win when it comes to popularity. Dog freaks outnumber cat fans by almost two-to-one.

All this doggy devotion may have something to do with dogs' big brainpower. "The average dog can learn 165 words; that's equivalent to the vocabulary of a 2-year-old child," says Stanley Coren, an animal behavior expert, in *Parade* magazine. Dog lovers say this makes canines especially aware of what's going on in the human world. Feline vocabularies can't compete—cats can learn about 35 words.

Another reason to love dogs? They work hard. Dogs have helped people herd cows and sheep for ages, but now these four-legged friends do more than ever. They guide the blind, hunt criminals, detect termites and gas leaks, and can even smell cancer in medical patients.

Cats are good hunters, but they are way less energetic. In fact, the average house cat spends 80 percent of the day lounging and sleeping.

PURRFECT PALS

For such snoozy animals, cats are surprisingly independent creatures. Most dogs rely on humans for food, exercise, bathing, and constant affection. Put out food and a litter box, and most cats are happy just to hang out.

Not to mention, kitties are a real bargain. Including food, toys, and vet visits over a lifetime, the cost of caring for a cat is about one sixth of usual dog expenses.

And when cats do get moving, these little acrobats are amazingly agile. "Cats are very nimble, with great balance," says veterinarian Michael Garvey in *Parade*. "I've seen cats that have fallen more than 32 stories and didn't have serious fractures." It's part of why cats are said to have nine lives. (They typically live about three or four years longer than dogs.)

THE FIGHT RAGES ON

The battle may never have a winner. Some people love both, and others seem to have a natural preference—an "animal" instinct—for one.

Not sure if you're a cat or a dog person? That's OK; there's a right pet for everyone.

You could always be a boa-constrictor or hermit-crab person instead.

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