

# Boys VS. Girls

**R**ecently after a dinner party, we were sitting drinking coffee when my cats Cali and Fudge appeared and took up position on the stairs so they could look down on us — no doubt surveying laps to see who would make a suitable seat.

My friend Cheryl remarked, "They're such girly girls."

Curious, I asked what she meant. Is it really possible to tell the difference between toms and queens from a glance? After all, coloring isn't necessarily a clue. And there's that song titled "A Boy Named Sue," so names aren't a sure thing either.

"Absolutely!" she confirmed. "It's the way they walk. All my cats are boys, and they would have been falling over each other to make an entrance. Your girls sashayed into the room like Mae West. Then they just sat there as if they were fluttering their eyelashes, observing the scene. Under similar circumstances, my boys would never sit still. They would be looking for something to bat about."

Intended to learn whether there actually is a difference between male and female felines, I started tossing the question around.

"Oh yes, definitely," announced another friend who has two girls and a boy. "My boy cat is far more loving than either of my girls. He demands more attention than the girls — and knows how to get it! Also, he's braver and more curious. When dogs come to visit, he comes to peer at them. The girls instantly take up residence in a cupboard. They also respect my privacy a lot more. If I'm reading the paper, he will come and sit in the middle of it, while the girls delicately step around it."

I've only ever had girl cats, so I couldn't add to the survey. Instead, I called behaviorist Nicholas Dodman and asked for his input.

"There's no one behavior that's truly unique to one sex,"

he says. "While both males and females display the same behaviors, male cats engage in far more object play than females do. In nature, males tend to be loners while females are more social, especially if they have not been spayed and have a litter of kittens to raise. And if you have more than one queen, they tend to coexist together rather like a girls' club, even looking after and suckling one another's youngsters."

There are always exceptions to the role gender plays in personality and both males and females make wonderful pets. Hair length, coat color and early handling in a kitten's life all contribute to shaping personality.

I also think the difference between girls and boys is colored by our own perceptions and the ways we tend to humanize our cats. Put a pretty collar on a female, and she appears to be prancing. Put the same feminine collar on a boy, and he instantly appears to be scowling at you for ruining his street cred! ☐

**Does gender play a role in feline personality?**



BY SANDY ROBINS

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