Top 10 Reasons Why Cats are Better Pets than Dogs

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It can start a war, end a marriage or strain a friendship. The truth about cats versus dogs is a hot-button debate that rages on, even if cat lovers know that their darlings swept to victory long ago. For cats, it's no contest: Their inspired playfulness and independent spirit are the secret envy of some humans, many of whom wish they could spend their own days batting at a catnip mouse and napping in the sun rather than tapping a computer keyboard. Even some die-hard dog lovers have inched toward the light of the feline side, drawn by their low-maintenance lifestyle and excellence as lap decorations. Why do cats best dogs? Here's a pawful of reasons.
When friends arrive at your home, a dog goes into a frenzy, barking, leaping and pawing at the newcomer. "Pay attention to me!" he begs, as his excited nails rake a guest's linen blazer. While the dog does everything possible for approval, from racing around the room to bouncing like a basketball, the cat is usually nowhere to be seen. Cats prefer to observe new arrivals from afar. For instance, under the bed or atop the refrigerator. Maybe, if the cat is in the mood, she'll come out to acknowledge this New Person with a tail twitch, a cautious once-over. But that's it. No effusive greetings, no jumping on laps or humping of legs. Invite a cat to your dinner party. She'll stay discreetly out of the way, while a dog lusts for -- and sometimes runs away with -- the main course.

Sweeter smelling.
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Even the most dogged of canine devotees must cop to this one. There's nothing quite like Eau de Fido, that earthy, unmistakable and not very attractive odor. All of the scented shampoos and daily brushing/combing/blow-drying rituals in the world can't fully remove or disguise it. You'll find it in your car and on your clothes. No one needs to ask if you have a dog: Their noses confirm it. Cats, with their constant self-grooming -- performed to regulate body temperature as well as to clean -- emit no such smell. If your cat perches on the new loveseat when you're not home, you'll never know.
The Internet is littered with comical cat photos and videos -- hundreds more were uploaded just as you read that sentence. Their legendary curiosity lands them in situations that prompt giggles. Ticklish kittens, a tabby entranced with its mirror image, a cat sedately walking across an open file cabinet. It's as if cats have an inherent knack for comic timing, even if they won't snicker at their own antics. And that feline economy of size helps: Most dogs need a bigger stage to clown. (Not to mention the need for constant applause.) But sit a cat in a sink or place a hamburger bun on its head, and you've got instant entertainment. It'll pose for the camera, indulge in some cat-itude, and invent a smooth move all its own.

Most dogs will always vocalize their moods. A cat will keep it to itself. Upset, happy, excited or just talkative, dogs bark. Loudly, dogs announce every news event, from a stranger at the door to a new flavor of treat. Cats, even with protesting meows over a flea bath, lack the chops to compete with a dog's decibel level. Feline complaints are mostly mews and occasional hisses, barely audible from another room. Your neighbors will never call to inform you that your cat's hissing is keeping him awake.
A cat's message to all bees, moths, ladybugs and the rest of the insect kingdom: Don't bug me. He means it. Cats, fascinated by winged things and crawly critters, are masters of extermination. They'll climb walls to dislodge a spider and its web -- even in the middle of the night. A lazy fly sneaking in through a screen door has no chance of survival. And a poor, defenseless cricket, cluelessly broadcasting its location, offers hours of entertainment before the cat ends the torture. The cat who's made his home insect-free still hopes for a visiting bug -- its got to keep those de-bugging skills sharp.

Ever see a dog's playthings? Shredded rawhide bones, torn tennis balls. They're in tatters (unless, of course, they've been swallowed). Cat toys tend to be hugged, carried and carefully hidden in beds or baskets. Cats keep their prizes safe from intruders who might steal that square felt thing with the bell in it, or the sparkly ball that squeaks. And cats firmly believe in stockpiling: A calico named Cassie once stashed 27 ping pong balls under a skirted rocking chair, apparently sensing a global shortage. Her owners thought the balls were lost. Instead they had become "cat collectibles." Cats also make better fashion choices than dogs -
- have you seen some of the outfits dogs allow themselves to be seen in? But no self-respecting feline would don a hot pink hoodie without clawing it to ribbons first.

A thunderstorm shakes the skies, drenching the dog walker as she waits for her trusty pet to take care of business. It's cold, it's midnight and this is all so inconvenient. In snow, sleet, heat or rain -- the dog needs a walk. Demands a walk. Bring the scooper, the scented disposal bags and patience. Meanwhile, a contented cat sits smugly in the window, unaffected by the downpour outside. A quick trip to the litter box and the cat's set for the night. Even on a sunny day, cats wouldn't dream of asking for a walk. Wear a leash? Yeah, right. Try placing a harness or leash on a cat, and watch how it squats, thinking that colorful ropy thing has somehow tied it down. What, you want the cat to lead the human around while wearing that? Please. Save it for the dog. Who must be walked. Again.
Hunters at heart, cats are miniature versions of their wild forebears, the lions, tigers, cheetahs and jaguars of the world. But cats can't down a wildebeest in your backyard, so they settle for smaller prey -- and share it with you. A gift offered by a cat, whether a mole, bird or unidentified critter part, is the highest tribute it can pay, proof of devotion to you. Yes, you'll be nauseated by this gift. But as with any present, you do the kind thing. Say, "Oh, thank you, kitty, that's so sweet of you." And that makes the cat's day. Sometimes, indoor-only cats offer gifts, too: a small stuffed toy, presented with a loud meow, says, "I've been looking all over for something you'd enjoy."

Two words. Laser pointer.
Toby Maudsley/Getty Images

Before the moving red dot became a cat's most favorite activity, felines had to settle for chasing a flashlight's beam. Boring! Then, the arrival of that dancing pinpoint turned cat play into a fast-forward ballet. Cats never tire of racing after that elusive speck. Slapping hopeful paws over it, they're baffled when it seems to escape. Where does it go? No matter, they're hot on the trail, and getting a cat-cardio workout while they're at it. While a dog will chase a ball, he has no interest in whatever that flashy, red thing is. Why pursue something if he can't fetch it for a reward? But cats know the laser pointer's real reward is the chase itself. And someday they really will nab that little red sucker.
No sound in the world rivals a cat's purr. Its thrumming rhythm alerts helpless kittens, assuring them that mama cat is nearby (along with the milk supply!). That comforting buzz tells humans that their feline friend is oh-so-content with life. Stroke a purring cat's side, caress its chin and feel the gentle rumble for instant stress relief. A hungry dog will plead for food by dancing at your feet or planting a nonstop wet kiss on your face; a cat sits pointedly near its dish, purring confidently because dinner is about to be served. Cats don't mind if you gripe about your day or spend too much time online; they'll sit nearby, with that softly motorized sound subbing for conversation. Who needs words when a purr says it all?