



DID YOU KNOW?

Cats have several amazing physical abilities and skills that are uniquely feline and make them seem like acrobats, ballet dancers, or gymnasts. For example:

Cats can retract their claws, which allows them to walk along almost any surface. When cats are young kittens, their claws are extended; but as muscles develop, they can retract their claws and, in this way, keep their claws sharp. When hunting, for example, cats can protract their claws. So, considering how versatile their claws are, why do cats get stuck in trees? It's because their claws curl inward only, which makes climbing up the trunk of a tree a lot easier than sliding down.

Cats can pronate their paws, meaning, they can turn their paws inward, which allows them to climb with extreme speed and efficiency, using their front paws to hold on.

- Do you ever catch your cat on the kitchen counter? Cats can jump very high because they have tremendously strong front leg muscles and also can coil their bodies like a spring.
- Even house cats who may not exercise much are very fast runners, reaching speeds up to 30 miles per hour. To appreciate this feat, think about the fastest person alive. His top speed? About 27 miles per hour.
- Cats can maneuver their bodies and jump down from high places, always landing on their feet. Why? For one thing, they don't have a collarbone but do possess very flexible backbones, allowing them to twist their bodies in midair so they can land safely. They also have a vestibular mechanism in their inner ear that tells them which way is up. This produces an amazing sense of balance and coordination.

Discussion prompts:

- Cats have certain skills and abilities that make them unique. Which of these do you admire most?
- What are your unique skills and abilities?
- Which of cats' abilities do you think are the most amazing?

Key words:

- Pronate
- Retract/Protract
- Maneuver
- Balance
- Acrobat
- Feat

Suggested activities:

- Super Mutt-i-gree®
- Cat-like Qualities
- Cat and Mouse Game
- Fact vs. Fiction