

56 - Big and Small Cats

Small cats Meow. Big cats Roar! The ancient Egyptians worshipped cats - but why? And what is it that makes both big and small cats among the most effective predators on the planet?

There are 38 species of cats on the planet. Most Big Cats are part of the genus *Panthera*. Small and medium cats, including house cats, are the genus *Felis*. Like feline. Ancient DNA suggests felines domesticated themselves! Thanks to their ability to hunt rodents -- these early ancestors of today's domestic cats were not only allowed to hang around farming communities -- they were encouraged. The Egyptians worshipped them. Cats were such good predators -- ancient travelers took cats with them on voyages to protect against rodents. Today, cats are among the most popular pets in the world. As many as [74 million cats](#) live in U.S. homes.

Meanwhile, there are 7 members of what is known as the Big Cat family: the lion, tiger, jaguar, leopard, snow leopard, clouded leopard and Sunda clouded leopard. Google them to see what they look like!

Throughout their evolution, wild and domestic cats show very few differences in their genetic makeup. In fact, both Big and Little Cats share 95.6% of their DNA. Which means your tiny tiger at home is a lot more like a giant tiger than you thought!

What You'll Learn

1. What are some similarities and differences between Big and Little Cats?
2. Where did small cats come from and how did they spread across the globe to become popular pets?
3. Why can't small cats roar? And why can't big cats purr?

Activities

1. Cats play a big part in literature and culture. Check out [these](#) cat fairy tales. Which one was your favorite?
2. Do you want to look like a lion? [This](#) fun activity lets younger children work on their scissor skills and can be used as masks.
3. Do some of your favorite shows have a big cat in them? [Here](#) are some fun crafts to pretend you are a big cat with!

Additional Resources

Unfortunately, not every kitty, big or small, has a safe environment to live in. Thousands of small cats need loving homes or medical care. Find out how you can help these animals through [the American Humane Society](#). While your local Humane Society always needs in person volunteers, having a food or toy drive for your local homeless animals is a great way to get kids involved in caring for animals.

As a special resource for Moms - for a nice break and some thoughtful reading we recommend you check out [A Word from Erin](#), where stay-at-home mom and former journalist Erin Elliott Bryan explores the highs and lows of parenting. Whether it's the unexpected lessons of distance learning, the curious musical taste of her 7-year-old son, or the lessons she learned from her childhood that impact her own parenting in surprising ways, Erin's writing is lighthearted, yet deeply personal. Check out Erin's [blog here](#).

Kid News

What does your favorite pair of shoes look like? Does it have laces or velcro? Can you put them on by yourself or do you need some help? Sometimes, people with disabilities or the elderly have a hard time getting their shoes on by themselves. Nike has been working with a 16 year old high school student on a more efficient shoe that can be put on without using your hands! [Check out](#) their cool design.¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com