

## What's With That Head-Butting?



Of all the mysterious things that kitties do, their bizarre head-butting ritual has got to be the cutest.

The way they would just drop whatever they're doing, quietly walk up to you and with that one precious gesture, make your heart melt into a puddle.

Have you ever wondered why they do this? Is she asking for your attention? Is head-butting just an equivalent of a kitty-hug? Or is there more to it than meets the eye? Let's find out.

## What's Going On In That Little Kitty Head?



When your cat walks up to you, lowers her head and seems to bump it gently (or not) against your face, she's doing what is called head-bunting, which is mistakenly but popularly also known as head-butting.

Bunting is a kind of bonding ritual that cats perform, and happens to be quite an affectionate behavior that cats display towards other human or animal members in their family. In a way, it's your cat's way of telling you that you're in her club. What they also do, while showing you their affection, is leave a scent on you, which isn't exactly marking you, but a reminder to themselves to know that you are someone who's a part of their kitty family and who they feel comfortable around. How they transfer this scent on to you when they bump their head against you, is

by activating scent glands on their head, situated right between their eyes and ears.

Communication using scents, forms a large part of how cats bond and express emotions. When a cat 'bunts', it leaves its unique 'scent autograph' on whatever she bunts against and leaving a scent on things and people that she likes, gives a reassuring familiarity to her surroundings.

## **Are They Marking Their Territory?**



A lot of pet-parents tend to mistake head-bunting for territory marking.



But when a cat bumps its head against your body, it isn't really marking you. It is an affectionate gesture and the cat is telling you that it likes you and is very happy. The way humans show affection with a hug, a kiss or by holding hands, in the kitty world, touching noses is the equivalent of a handshake, and head-bunting amounts to going a step further and hugging someone.

## Which Kitty Gets To Head-Butt?



In a multi-cat household, the pecking order establishes the quiet and shy cats as the ones who'll take care of urine marking. The

responsibility of head-bunting, which ranks higher than urine marking, falls on the dominant cat.

So you will often find the more confident, friendly cats in the house, head-bunting you and the other people and animals in the house.

## How To Reciprocate Kitty Love?



When you come back home and see your kitty running over to greet you, you may want to come down to her level and offer her your head, so that she can give you a proper kitty welcome by bonking her head against yours.

It's also the perfect opportunity to enrich your bond with her and tell her that you love her too, in a way that she understands.

It's something that all cat-parents wait for. That rare moment when your kitty decides to shower affection on you, and not the other way round.

If you are very close to your cat, you can head-bunt her back or just offer your head. You could also scratch her gently under her chin or talk softly to her.

Usually, when your cat head-bunts you, she's clearly in a happy and loving mood. But pet-experts still feel that it's better to enjoy the moment, without making the cat uncomfortable with your response. Some cats may not be expecting a response, in which case, you may want to wait for them to head bunt you the next time, and maybe extend a hand and build trust slowly.

The better your relationship with your cat, the more she will find your presence comforting and safe and the more she will head-butt you.

If you don't have a close relationship with your kitty, you can build it slowly, with soft brushing, offering her treats, or just getting down to her level, calling her to you and speaking to her sweetly.

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