

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

# READING

## Are Cat Brains Really Shrinking?

### Vocabulary Preview

- Match the words on the left with the meanings on the right.

- |                  |          |   |
|------------------|----------|---|
| 1. shrinking     | <u>E</u> | A. a small wild cat that lives in mountains and forests |
| 2. measure       | _____    | B. the process of making wild animals used to humans    |
| 3. skull         | _____    | C. threatening or violent behavior                      |
| 4. wildcat       | _____    | D. the bones that surround the head and brain           |
| 5. confirm       | _____    | E. becoming smaller in size                             |
| 6. study (n.)    | _____    | F. to show that something is true                       |
| 7. domestication | _____    | G. to find out the size of something                    |
| 8. aggression    | _____    | H. a piece of research that examines something          |

- Use the above words to complete the sentences. Change the forms of verbs and nouns when necessary.

1. Mark recently did a study on the effects of global warming.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ my height yesterday. I am six feet tall.
3. Acts of \_\_\_\_\_ between countries often lead to war.
4. Our company isn't doing well. Its profits are \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The hotel called me to \_\_\_\_\_ my room booking for next Tuesday.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ of many animals began thousands of years ago.
7. I saw a fossil of a dinosaur \_\_\_\_\_ in a museum last week.
8. One kind of \_\_\_\_\_ in North America is called a bobcat.

- Choose any two of the above words and write your own sentences.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

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## READING

Topics: Cats / Animals and Birds

# Are Cat Brains Really Shrinking?



It's true! Cat brains really are **shrinking**<sup>1</sup>! In the 1960s and 1970s, scientists **measured**<sup>2</sup> the **skulls**<sup>3</sup> and brains of modern house cats and compared them to the brains of **wildcats**<sup>4</sup> living in Europe. They discovered that the brains of house cats have been shrinking since they first began to live together with humans in the Middle East 10,000 years ago. In January 2022, an article in *The Royal Society Open Source* journal **confirmed**<sup>5</sup> this discovery in a new **study**<sup>6</sup> done by a group of researchers in Vienna. The study compared the brain sizes of house cats to their wildcat relatives living not only in Europe, but also in Africa. The results were the same as the original study. The brains of house cats are about 25% smaller than their wild cousins. Scientists say this smaller brain size is caused by **domestication**<sup>7</sup>, resulting in changes in the DNA of animals that have lived with humans for hundreds or even thousands of years. Smaller brain size caused by domestication is not unusual, however. It is also seen in other animals such as sheep, rabbits, and dogs. This might mean that cats are becoming less intelligent ... or it might instead mean that other parts of the brain (related to fear and **aggression**<sup>8</sup>) are becoming smaller and less important. Whether cats are becoming less intelligent, because of shrinking brains, would certainly be an interesting question for future research.

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## READING

### Grammar Practice

# Are Cat Brains Really Shrinking?

It's true! Cat brains really are shrinking! In the 1960s and 1970s, scientists (1)\_\_\_\_\_ the skulls and brains of modern house cats and compared them (2)\_\_\_\_\_ the brains of wildcats living in Europe. They discovered that the brains of house cats have (3)\_\_\_\_\_ since they first (4)\_\_\_\_\_ to live together with humans in the Middle East 10,000 years ago. In January 2022, an article in *The Royal Society Open Source* journal confirmed this discovery in a new study (5)\_\_\_\_\_ by a group of researchers in Vienna. The study compared the brain sizes of house cats to their wildcat relatives living (6)\_\_\_\_\_ only in Europe, but also in Africa. The results were the same as the original study. The brains of house cats are about 25% smaller (7)\_\_\_\_\_ their wild cousins. Scientists say this smaller brain size is (8)\_\_\_\_\_ by domestication, resulting in changes in the DNA of animals that have lived with humans for hundreds or even thousands (9)\_\_\_\_\_ years. Smaller brain size caused by domestication (10)\_\_\_\_\_ not unusual, however. It is also seen in other animals such as sheep, rabbits, and dogs. This might mean that cats are becoming less intelligent ... or it might instead mean that (11)\_\_\_\_\_ parts of the brain (related to fear and aggression) are becoming smaller and less important. Whether cats are becoming less intelligent, because of shrinking brains, would certainly be an interesting question for future (12)\_\_\_\_\_.

**1.**

- (A) have measured
- (B) measure
- (C) measured

**2.**

- (A) to
- (B) as
- (C) on

**3.**

- (A) shrinks
- (B) shrink
- (C) been shrinking

**4.**

- (A) begin
- (B) began
- (C) begun

**5.**

- (A) done
- (B) did
- (C) doing

**6.**

- (A) no
- (B) not
- (C) don't

**7.**

- (A) than
- (B) then
- (C) with

**8.**

- (A) because
- (B) cause
- (C) caused

**9.**

- (A) for
- (B) in
- (C) of

**10.**

- (A) is
- (B) are
- (C) were

**11.**

- (A) other
- (B) another
- (C) there

**12.**

- (A) researches
- (B) research
- (C) researched

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# READING

## Are Cat Brains Really Shrinking?



### How Much Do You Understand?

● **Complete the statements.**

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. The brains of house cats     | A. brains than house cats           |
| 2. Wildcats have bigger         | B. than the brains of wildcats.     |
| 3. Cats have lived              | C. be less intelligent than before. |
| 4. Cats' brains are 25% smaller | D. animals' brains to shrink.       |
| 5. Domestication causes         | E. are becoming smaller             |
| 6. It is possible that cats may | F. with humans for 10,000 years.    |

### Discuss

● **Discuss the following questions with your classmates.**

1. Do you have a pet cat? If 'yes', what is its name? If 'no', would you like to have a pet cat? Why? / Why not?
2. Do you think house cats are less intelligent than wildcats? Why? / Why not?
3. Do you think house cats are smarter than dogs? Why? / Why not?

### Write

● **Can you think of three other possible differences between house cats and wildcats?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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## WRITING

### Are Cat Brains Really Shrinking?

- *“Cats are more intelligent than dogs.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write a paragraph below and give reasons for your answer.*

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## Lesson "Are Cat Brains Really Shrinking?"

**Grammar Focus** Mixed: Past Simple, Present Perfect, Past Perfect Continuous, Comparatives

**Vocabulary** 235 words

**A1** words-60% / **A2** words-18% / **B1** words-9% / **B2** words-6% /

**C1** words-1% / **C2** words-1% / **Off List**-7%

**AWL Words** in this text: *confirmed, intelligent, journal, research, researchers*

Vocabulary Analysis by: [vocabkitchen.com](http://vocabkitchen.com)

**Level** Intermediate to Upper Intermediate (CEFR B1 – B2)

### ANSWER KEY Page 1

#### ● Vocabulary

- |      |                  |
|------|------------------|
| 1. E | 1. study         |
| 2. G | 2. measured      |
| 3. D | 3. aggression    |
| 4. A | 4. shrinking     |
| 5. F | 5. confirm       |
| 6. H | 6. domestication |
| 7. B | 7. skull         |
| 8. C | 8. wildcat       |

### ANSWER KEY Page 3

#### ● Grammar

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 7. A  |
| 2. A | 8. C  |
| 3. C | 9. C  |
| 4. B | 10. A |
| 5. A | 11. A |
| 6. B | 12. B |

### ANSWER KEY Page 4

#### ● How Much Do You Understand?

1. The brains of house cats (E) are becoming smaller.
2. Wildcats have bigger (A) brains than house cats.
3. Cats have lived (F) with humans for 10,000 years.
4. Cat's brains are 25% smaller (B) than the brains of wildcats.
5. Domestication causes (D) animals' brains to shrink.
6. It is possible that cats (C) may be less intelligent than before.

#### Article Sources:

- *Cat brains are shrinking, and it's all human's fault*  
<https://www.livescience.com/house-cat-brain-size-shrink>
- *Cat*  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat>
- *Who's to Blame for Shrinking Feline Brains?*  
<https://www.ripleys.com/weird-news/whos-to-blame-for-shrinking-feline-brains/>