

**Nancy Yang:** I was trying to snuggle the other night with both the dog and the cat, the cat scratched my forehead because it was trying to get into the right position.

**Tom Weber:** That's because you are doing it wrong. You did it wrong, it's your fault, not the cat's fault.

**Announcer:** From the brains behind Brains On, it's Smash Boom Best. The show for people with big opinions.

**Molly Bloom:** Hi and welcome. This is Smash Boom Best. We take two things, smash them together to find out which is best. I'm Molly Bloom and today we have a fierce debate battle of domesticated beasts. It's cats versus dogs.

**Kid 1:** Dogs definitely because they're more playful.

**Kid 2:** Cats because it's more satisfying when you tame it to cat than a dog.

**Kid 3:** With a cat, it's a lot more cheaper, calmer, less stressful.

**Kid 4:** You can actually play a game with a dog.

**Kid 5:** Many people say, "You can't play with cats." Yes, you can because you have cat toys.

**Kid 6:** Even if I had a dog and I should be running around with my dog all the time but I can't really take my cats to the park.

**Kid 7:** Dogs because dogs actually love you. Cats are just using you for food.

**Kid 8:** Cats for sure because you can't hold a dog but you can hold a cat. [crosstalk]

**Molly:** This might be our most contentious episode ever. In one corner, human's best friend, lick of faces, chewer of toys, tail wagging, happy to see you, always up for a game of fetch. It's dogs! And in the other corner, sleek and graceful, quiet and self-sufficient, down for a cuddle, free pest control with a cute face to boot, it's cats! Here today to judge this high stakes debate is Oscar Wolfe. Hi Oscar.

**Oscar:** Hello.

**Molly:** Where do you currently stand in this age-old debate?

**Oscar:** I think I'm pretty neutral here because thanks to my parents I have had neither. I've only had fish so I think I should be pretty unbiased here.

**Molly:** You're the perfect judge for this debate. Just to start, when I say the word 'dog,' what jumps into your head?

**Oscar:** Fun, fetch, just playing with them because they're pretty playful animals.

**Molly:** What about cat, what jumps in your head when I say 'cat?'

**Oscar:** I feel like they're much more alone. They can play by themselves, they have more of a sense of dignity.

**Molly:** How about you listeners? Do you think you have a favorite already? It's the perfect time to talk it out before we get started, you can hit pause and come back when you're ready. All set. Okay.

Here to represent our feline friends, is cat aficionado, Tom Weber. In one pithy sentence Tom, why are cats better than dogs?

**Tom:** I think that cats do all the things that we humans wish we could do on a day to day basis and that's why they are better.

**Molly:** Very compelling. Now representing good boys and good girls everywhere, we have Nancy Yang on team dog.

**Nancy:** Team dog!

**Molly:** In one sentence Nancy, why are dogs superior?

**Nancy:** Dogs are at the core just what humans want to be. They want to be good and that's just what dogs are, they are just goodness and it's just overflowing. They really just bring out the best in people because they are so kind and so eager to love us and be loved.

**Molly:** I can already tell this is going to be an amazing debate. Here are the rules. We're going to hear team cat and team dog compete in four rounds of debate challenges. The first round is Declaration of Greatness when both sides compete for your vote using history, science and the power of persuasion.

Next up is the Micro-round. It's a creative challenge that both teams have had time to prepare for.

Round three is the sneak attack. It's a different challenge every time and our debaters have no idea what to expect.

And our last round is the final six when both teams have to make their case in six words or less.

After each round we'll ask Oscar to give a point for the most convincing side. Listeners at home, you might want to grab a pen and paper so you can award your own point.

At the end, we'll add it all up and see who gets crowned the best ever. It's time to kick this thing off with our first debate round.

**Announcer:** Declaration of Greatness.

**Molly:** Both teams have come prepared to deliver a declaration of greatness for their side. We flipped a coin to decide and Nancy, you're up first, have at it.

**Nancy:** There's a reason dogs are called man's best friend. They're full of heart and they love you unconditionally, they'll never judge you, they don't hold grudges and they think you're the best person in the world. All of this makes them a million times better than cats who are, let's be honest, kind of mean sometimes. <<mean cat sound>>Stay back kitty. Aside from personality, dogs are actually good for us too. Let me explain.

Fact 1. Dogs may help us live longer. A recent study from Sweden found dog owners are less likely to die from certain kinds of heart diseases than people without dogs. Other studies show dog owners have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure. Maybe it's because dog owners get exercise from walking and playing with their pets. Unlike cat owners who really don't have to do anything with their pets.

Fact 2. Dogs love dirt and dirt don't hurt. In fact, it might be good for babies. One study found that infants who grow up with dogs in the house are less likely to get certain illnesses when compared to those in petless homes. The theory is called the hygiene hypothesis. When babies are exposed to dog dander and the germs brought in from the outdoors, it helps train their developing immune systems to fight off more serious stuff like bad bacteria and viruses.

Fact 3. Man's best friend helps us make new friends. A study from the University of Western Australia found that dog owners know more of their neighbors than people without pets. I can vouch for this. Whenever I'm out walking my Jack Russell terrier, people stop me all the time to say things like, "Your dog is so cute." Thanks! See, I'm already making friends.

Another study found that if you have a dog with you, people on the street are actually more likely to help if, say, you needed some change for the bus, because if dogs are good and you have a dog with you, then you must be good too. Right?

Fact 4. Dogs are insanely loyal and love us with their whole hearts. They would do anything for us, even wait for us forever. Take the story of Hachiko, a Japanese Akita. He lived in the 1920s and used to go to the train station in Tokyo every day to drop off his owner and then pick him up at the end of the day. Sadly, his owner died unexpectedly at the office one day and never came back. Hachiko refused to leave the train station and he waited there every day for 10 years. I am pretty sure no cat would ever do that.

Finally, dogs are real-life heroes. Heroes.

[music]

They keep us safe, working as sniffer dogs at airports and at the mall, they use their super noses to sniff out drugs or bombs.

They're also police officers. They're called in to help look for survivors after tornadoes and earthquakes. They even work as service dogs acting as our helping hands or eyes for the visually impaired. I have never seen a seeing eye cat by the way, probably for a good reason.

Even more amazing, some dogs can be trained to sniff out certain medical conditions like cancer or if a person has low blood sugar, which can be very dangerous. Bottom line, these dogs save lives. Have you heard of the dogs that saved an entire town?

It was a cold blizzardy winter in Alaska, back in January of 1925. A deadly case of diphtheria broke out in the remote town of Nome. Because of extreme winter conditions, no planes or ships could get medicine there but sled dogs could. Over just five days, 150 dogs and their 20 drivers relayed the lifesaving serum across 674 miles in some of the worst conditions imaginable. Can you imagine a cat doing that? No, way.

**Molly:** Excellent work Nancy. The canine contingent comes out swinging. Oscar, what fact that Nancy shared grabbed you the most, would you say?

**Oscar:** That thing about the dog always coming back for its owner, even once its owner had already died, that was just really convincing and persuading because it showed just how much dogs can love and how much emotion... That whole argument just brought up a lot of emotion and it also had a lot of science and facts behind it.

**Molly:** It's a very touching story. Tom?

**Tom:** Yes.

**Molly:** You get 30 seconds to counter all of those facts and emotions. Your rebuttal starts now.

**Tom:** On living longer -- I would point to stats that also show that when a cat enters a room, your blood pressure goes down, that's worth noting. Making friends is very easy to do if you have a cat, especially if you make videos of them and post them online. This whole thing about not judging from the perspective of dogs, can we all just face it? I think some people need to be judged every now and then and that's not the worst thing in the world. Blind loyalty, what has that ever gotten us in the world?

**Molly:** Thank you, Tom. Now everyone keep cool. Don't make up your mind just yet because team cat is on the prowl. Tom, take it away. Tom?

**Tom:** Sorry. I was too busy watching cat videos on my phone. Have you seen this one? It's an oldie but a goodie. The cat announces his nom nom noms while eating. Do you have a favorite cat video? How about the one where a cat freaks out while watching the movie Psycho? Or The one of the cat knocking the you-know-what out of a printer. [laughs] A classic. There are videos of cats battling rolls of toilet paper, getting stuck in boxes, or that masterpiece of a cat dressed in a shark costume riding a Roomba around the kitchen like it's totally normal. Therein lies the crux of my argument friends. Cats are everywhere and it's because they deserve to be.

They entertain billions of humans across the globe. The museum of the moving image in New York had an exhibit a few years ago called *How Cats Took Over the Internet*. With their awesomeness obviously.

Sorry dogs, cats are a more popular pet in the US. One estimate has about 94 million of them in the States compared to 89 million dogs. We have the videos to prove it.

I also vote team feline because of their mysteries.

[music]

The story with dogs is they made a trade with humans. You see, scientists believe a long time ago, 10 to 30,000 years ago, humans and wolves started hanging around each other. The wolves basically said, we'll calm down and we'll domesticate if you feed

us. Humans did and over time wolves became tamer, lamer dogs. They've been subservient ever since.

[music]

Cats, well, as Abigail Tucker pointed out in her book a few years ago, *The Lion in the Living Room*, we're not so sure such a grand bargain exists with cats or that humans had any choice in the matter. Cats decided to live where they wanted -- eventually indoors and we went along with it. You could argue that cats tamed and trained us.

It's no wonder the ancient Egyptians thought cats were gods. In ancient art from that culture, they're depicted in paintings. Some cats were mummified much like the powerful people of the era. In terms of hunting, cats win paws down. When you see a cat pounce on a stuffed mouse, it's digging into the DNA of what it means to be a cat.

For all the talk about how dogs can hear things that humans can't, it turns out cats can actually hear to a higher range than dogs. You just don't hear about cat whistles because cats won't come to you. They got other stuff to do. Cats ears also always point towards the noise. Try it. Snap or tap a table and watch at least one of your cat's ears move.

Given all these super traits cats have it makes sense to try to harness the power. The people of one small town in Belgium tried to train cats to deliver mail in the 1800s. It didn't last long. Cats weren't into it. They were like, "You can't tell me what to do". [cat sounds] Come here kitty, come on. [cat sounds]

The CIA once tried to enlist cats to help eavesdrop. They actually implanted a recorder into a cat hoping it would walk past the bench where two people were talking. The experiment ended when the cat was hit by a car. It's a sad outcome, but an important one. If you ask me, the cat sacrificed itself to declare you're not the boss of me and we humans love it.

Remember the saying, 'dogs have owners, cats have staff.' Let me conclude with one final point about their intrigue. One of the big mysteries that remains in this world is the cat's purr. For all the research that's been done about the purr, there's still a lot of debate on both how and why they do it. Is it because they're content or sleepy or about to attack, or just mugging for the camera?

There's no super conclusive answer. Some cats are found to purr when they're stressed out. The frequency of a purr has been shown to increase bone density and promote

healing. Because of this, some researchers think the vibrations created by a purr might actually help a cat's recovery. How cool is that?

[music]

Cats rule, dogs drool.

**Molly:** Meow, those are some pretty good points. Oscar, what is your favorite fact from Tom's argument?

**Oscar:** Well, the whole thing about purrs at the end, I had no idea about that. I thought they just purred. There was no real reason, and then at the beginning, I had no idea that cats were actually the more popular pet than dogs in America. I just assumed it was dogs.

**Molly:** I didn't know that either.

**Tom:** See you learn things here.

**Molly:** Now Nancy, you get 30 seconds to bark back.

**Nancy:** This whole thing about cats being a more popular pet, that's really suspicious to me because you know what, I would need to check those numbers again. Because that's a number that's a little suspicious to me. Going into this cat video about cats dominating, people are so entertained by cat videos that's because they have nothing else to do but star in cat videos. They're not out saving the world. They're not out beating bombs. They have nothing to do but sit and entertain people by being in a video. You might as well put them to work that way because they're not going to work for you any other way. Cats are just there for themselves.

**Molly:** Thank you, Nancy. Well, that is it for round one. Well done both sides. Now, Oscar, this is the hard part. You've got to award one point to the side who swayed you the most. You don't have to say it out loud. Just mark it on your paper and keep track.

**Oscar:** It was really close.

**Molly:** I know, it's tough. Listeners this is your time to do the same. We'll give you a second to think it over.

**Tom:** Google some classic cat videos to get the full effect of my argument.

**Nancy:** Or just meet any dog ever because chances are they already love you.

[music]

**Molly:** If you have an idea for an epic showdown, we want to hear about it. Go to [smashboom.org](http://smashboom.org) to submit your idea. That's what Natasha did.

**Natasha:** My debate idea is Dragons versus unicorns.

**Molly:** At the end of the show we'll find out which of these fantastical creatures Natasha is rooting for.

**Oscar:** Since this is such a new show we really need your help.

**Molly:** Please talk about, text about, shout about the show to anyone who will listen.

**Oscar:** If you're running for Congress, why not suddenly mention us in your stump speech.

**Molly:** The only thing to fear is fear itself and missing out on Smash Boom Best.

**Oscar:** Thanks.

[music]

**Molly:** This is Smash Boom Best. We are settling the cat and dog debate once and for all. Which one is cooler. Cats or dogs. I hope you've marked your point, Oscar.

**Oscar:** Yes.

**Molly:** Now we're moving on to the second round.

[music]

It's the micro round. Nancy and Tom have had time to come up with answers for this one and the challenge they were given is "If your animal ruled the world." This is a quick back and forth round where you each tell us why the world would be better if your pet was in charge. Team dog, you're up first.

**Nancy:** Dogs live in the now. They don't worry about the past or the future. They're focused on living their best life right now. So would we. We would stress a lot less about what's happening last week or what's coming up next month.

**Tom:** If cats ruled the world, by the way, I'm confused about if, I'm pretty sure they already do rule the world but if cats ruled the world we would have less divisive politics online and more cats online. How can that be a bad thing?

**Nancy:** I'm going back to my first argument, since dogs live in the now, they forgive and forget. They'll never say, "Oh, I don't want to play with Spot over there because he stole my ball that one time. No, they don't care. They've already forgiven Spot. We're all friends again.

**Tom:** If cats ruled the world we would be required to work less and nap more. Sign me up. We would also probably have to build things higher in each room so we could jump up and climb onto them. Going to go climb on top of the shelf, that's how you go to sleep at night. That's just great exercise people.

**Nancy:** Remember what I said about dogs wanting to make us happy? They are givers. Think about if dogs said we had to spend our days trying to make other people happy, everyone would smile more and we'd all be a lot nicer. When you make someone happy, you make you happy. It's a win-win.

**Tom:** If cats ruled the world, keep this in mind. Cats don't respect personal space, they climb all over you with abandon. I'm pretty sure we would all have to sit all over each other on buses and trains. This is the best way to get to know a stranger. We're going to be all friends people.

**Molly:** I would be down to live in either world really except for maybe the sitting on strangers part. How about you Oscar? It's time for you to give a point to the better world in your opinion.

**Oscar:** Okay, I know this.

**Nancy:** That was fast. Oh my gosh. One of us was really convincing.

**Molly:** Listeners it's time for you to give a point as well and you better be quick about it because we're moving on to...

The sneak attack round is always a surprise. Neither side knows what's coming. Tom, Nancy are you ready to hear your challenge?

**Nancy:** Yes.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Molly:** It is called "By any other name." Let's pretend the side you're arguing for didn't have a name. We would like you to come up with a few alternative names for that thing. For example, if you were arguing in favor of mountains, you might rename them, dirt muscles or raised forests or how about mega mounds. We'll give you a second to work. We'd like you to do two names for your side and one name for the other side.

[music]

**Molly:** All right. Since Nancy went first last time, let's have Tom go first with team cat.

**Tom:** Dignified house lion. Awesome purr machine. Then my--

**Molly:** Your dog name?

**Tom:** Slobbery mouth-breather.

[laughter]

**Molly:** Ouch. Okay Nancy and team dog.

**Nancy:** I'm going to start with BFFs because that's what they are, your best friend forever. Then, I'm just going to- if it's a boy or a girl, "Good boys. Good girls." That's what they are because that's what they are. Cats are "rascally, never let you sleep. Pay attention to me, Now go away demons."

[laughter]

**Tom:** Below the belt here.

**Nancy:** Ouch.

**Tom:** Meow.

**Nancy:** I mean that's what they are sometimes.

**Molly:** Okay, it's time for Oscar to give another point to whichever side won that battle.

**Oscar:** All right.

**Molly:** Listeners, here's your chance to do the same. Think. Mark a point and then, we'll move on. Now it is down to the wire. We've got one last itty-bitty chance to take it all.

**Announcer:** The final six.

**Molly:** That's right. Tom, Nancy, you each get six final words to persuade us. Tom, tell us what you got.

**Tom:** Oscar, you're ready?

**Oscar:** I'm ready.

**Tom:** Humans want to act like cats.

**Molly:** Nancy, take it home.

**Nancy:** Dogs are happy. Cats are grumpy.

**Molly:** That's it. There's nothing more to hear. Oscar, give your final point. Add it all up.

**Nancy:** Team dog.

**Tom:** Team cat. Meow.

[laughter]

**Molly:** All right, Oscar. Who is the perfect pet companion?

**Oscar:** All right. This was really close. Every round was really close, and my final result is, dogs win.

**Nancy:** Yes. Dogs. Dogs rule, cats drool.

**Tom:** I feel like I failed an entire species.

[laughter]

**Molly:** Oscar, what won you over?

**Oscar:** The whole thing about dogs being really nice and fun. That was really good. Then, also, them about loving. Just all the positive emotions really won me over.

**Molly:** The world needs more love.

**Oscar:** Exactly.

**Tom:** Can I just say that Oscar's last name is Wolfe, which is a kind of dog. I'm not saying anything. I'm just saying.

**Molly:** Saying there might be some inherent bias here? You've heard which team Oscar thinks is the best, but that doesn't mean he's right. Head to [smashboom.org](http://smashboom.org) and cast your own vote for cats or dogs. If we missed a crucial argument, let us know and while you're internetting, don't forget to rate and review our show anywhere you can. It helps us find more opinionated people like you. That's it for this battle of the best pets. Before we go, let's see who Natasha thinks would win in a unicorn versus dragon fantasy showdown.

**Natasha:** Dragon. They're really cool and there are tons and tons and tons of species of dragons. They're really spiky. Some of them have spikes on them.

**Molly:** Poor unicorns. They didn't stand a chance with this judge. Okay debaters, do you want to help me with the credits?

**Tom:** Sure.

**Nancy:** Sure thing.

**Tom:** Yes. Smash Boom Best is produced for American Public Media by Molly Bloom, Marc Sanchez and Sanden Totten.

**Nancy:** We had engineering help today from Michael Osborne.

**Oscar:** I would like to thank Ali Kaplan and Lauren Dee.

**Molly:** Nancy and Tom, do you have any special thanks you'd like to give?

**Nancy:** I would like to thank all the dogs in the world for making the world a much better place and, especially, my dog Mickey. He turns 10 this April. Say happy birthday.

**Tom:** I would like to thank the cats of the world for being cats and my own two cats, Yogi and Judo. Yogi is 18. He's a senior. He's very wise.

**Molly:** We want to give a special thanks to the students who shared their pet preference at the beginning of the show. That's Amber Green, Solana Yang, Nadia Viegas, Daisy Garcia, Bo Kamal, Jager and Ezra Axel.

**Cast:** Thanks for listening.