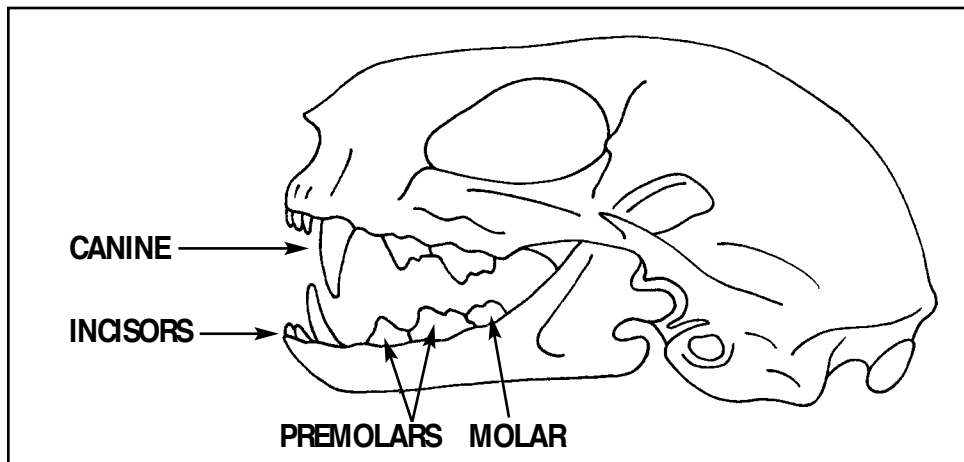


# How to Determine a Cat's or Dog's Age

**E**xamining teeth is one of the best ways to determine the approximate age of a cat or dog. Look at the degree of *growth* to determine the ages of kittens and puppies, and look at the degree of *wear* to determine the ages of adult cats and dogs. The diagram and chart below can help.

Be aware of two things that can throw off your estimate. First, an animal who has received dental care will have better-looking teeth than an animal who has not received such treatment. Second, variations exist among animals, even two from the same litter. Teeth are only a rough indicator of any animal's actual age.

*Shelters are depositories for animals of all types and ages, from the cute, unweaned kitten whose eyes are barely open to the graying, noble 17-year-old shepherd mix who can hardly stand on his own. How can you figure out the age of an animal who falls somewhere in between these two extremes? Start by looking at the teeth.*



Note: The location of teeth in a dog's jaw is similar to the cat's jaw shown here.

<i>ESTIMATED AGE</i>	<i>CAT'S TEETH</i>	<i>DOG'S TEETH</i>
2-4 weeks	Deciduous (baby) incisors coming in	No noticeable tooth growth
3-4 weeks	Deciduous (baby) canines coming in	Deciduous (baby) canines coming in
4-6 weeks	Deciduous (baby) premolars coming in on lower jaw	Deciduous (baby) incisors and premolars coming in
8 weeks	All deciduous (baby) teeth are in	All deciduous (baby) teeth are in
3½ - 4 months	Permanent incisors coming in	No noticeable permanent tooth growth
4-5 months	Permanent canines, premolars, and molars coming in	Permanent incisors coming in; some growth of premolars and molars
5-7 months	All permanent teeth in by 6 months	Permanent canines, premolars, and molars coming in; all teeth in by 7 months
1 year	Teeth white and clean	Teeth white and clean
1-2 years	Teeth may appear dull with some tartar build-up (yellowing) on back teeth	Teeth may appear dull with some tartar build-up (yellowing) on back teeth
3-5 years	Teeth show more tartar build-up (on all teeth) and some tooth wear	Teeth show more tartar build-up (on all teeth) and some tooth wear
5-10 years	Teeth show increased wear and disease; pigment visible on gums	Teeth show increased wear and disease
10-15 years	Teeth are worn and show heavy tartar build-up; some teeth may be missing	Teeth are worn and show heavy tartar build-up; some teeth may be missing

Illustration by Susie Duckworth