

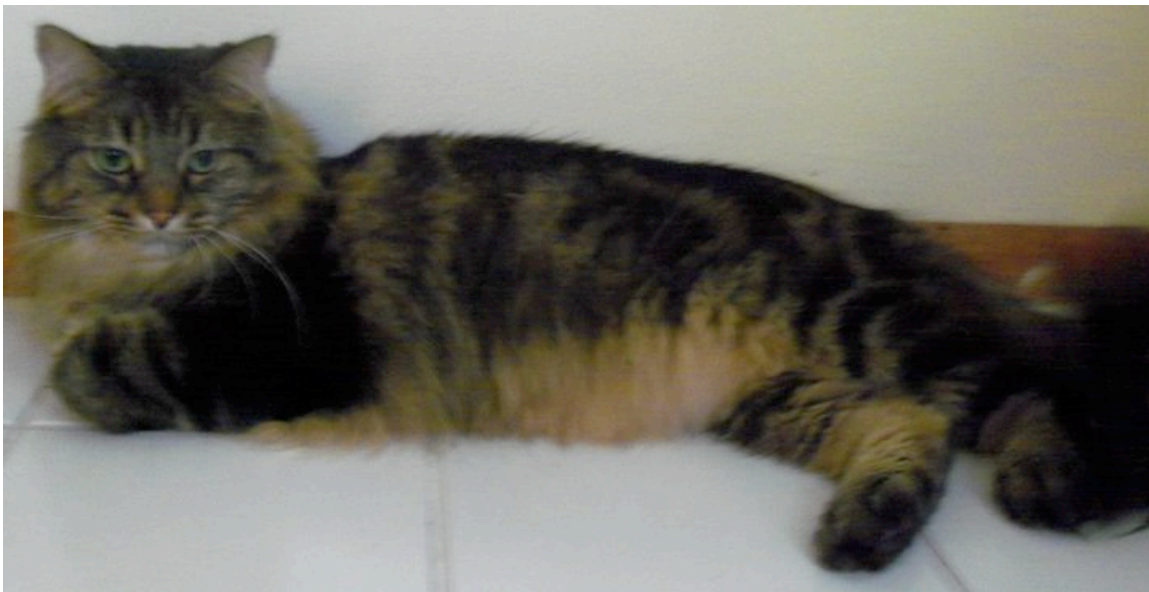
Dear Katie~

My name is Lauren. I live in Madison, Wisconsin with my fiancé Kristofer. We are getting married in January. We are very busy planning our wedding, but it's very exciting too. Our wedding will be at the Milwaukee Public Museum, so we'll get to have some of our wedding pictures in front of the T-Rex eating another dinosaur. It looks like this:



If people get bored of dancing or if they don't know anyone else, they can wander around the museum to look at other cool exhibits and learn neat stuff during our wedding reception. It should be a very fun time for everyone!

We also have a cat named Mateo. He looks like this:



He is five years old. His type is a Maine Coon. They were bred to be good hunters. We keep him inside all the time, but he likes to look out the window at the birds and squirrels outside. He sometimes forgets that there's glass in the window and he'll try to pounce at them and hit his head! He likes to play with us and sit on our laps a lot.

I have one brother named Jackson. He is a senior at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. He studies Electrical Engineering. He will graduate in December, and then in January he will start working for a company in Kansas called Garmin. They make GPSs (the things in cars that can help tell you where you are and give you directions). He will be working in the Marine division, meaning he will help make the GPSs better for boats so people know where they are on the lake and can catch more fish.

Kristofer has an older brother named Adam who is a Medical Doctor. One of his specialties that he studied is how the heart works. Adam's wife is also in medical school right now. Kristofer also has a twin brother named Stefan. He is in the field of food science. As a food scientist, he helps make sure the foods we buy are safe and of consistent quality.

Now let's finally get to what I do! After high school, I went to college at Denison University in Ohio. This is what Denison looks like from above:



My undergraduate degree was a Bachelor of Science with a major in Psychology, a minor in Biology, and a concentration in Neuroscience. That all means that I studied a lot about how the brain works and why people think and behave the way they do. I was involved in lots of clubs in college. One of my favorites was Neuroscience Education and Research at Denison, but we usually called it **NERD!** We did many different activities, but my favorites were when we got to interact with kids about your age. Sometimes we went to a museum and taught groups of kids about how the brain works by using illusions. Every year we also did a neuroscience trivia contest for high school students called the Brain Bee.

Now I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am in the Developmental Psychology department. The lab I work in is called the Twin Autism Project. It is part of a bigger lab called the Wisconsin Twin Project. I study twins where one or both of them are autistic. This means that they process information differently and some things, like making friends, are harder for them. But people with autism are also better at some things than other people, like concentrating hard and having a good memory. I am learning more about how their genes (their DNA that they inherit from their parents) and their environment can influence their development. I also study how they process sensory information. This means they might be more or less sensitive to how something sounds, feels, tastes, looks, or smells than other people.

In addition to doing research on twins with autism, I also take some classes. This semester I was in a class called Infant Language Acquisition. We learned really interesting things about how babies learn language. It might not seem like it at first, but babies are actually very smart! I also help teach some classes. That is one of my favorite parts of what I do. This semester I am the Teacher's Assistant for a class called Intermediate Statistics. I teach senior Psychology students how to do the math to analyze the experiments they do. Math is really important in science, because it helps us make sense of our data (the things we observe).

Even though I'm pretty busy doing research, taking classes, and teaching classes, I do find time to have lots of fun outside work too. One of the things my friends and I like to do to relax is go to the Memorial Union Terrace on the UW campus. There's even a giant chair. They look like this:



I also like to run, have dinner parties with my friends, and go to the movies. It might sound boring, but I'm also in a philosophy club that I enjoy a lot.

I want to learn more about you, too. Do you have any pets? How about siblings? What are your favorite activities to do outside of school? What are your favorite classes in school? What's the coolest thing you've learned so far this year? What's the most fun experience you've had or story to tell from this year? What do you and your friends do when you hang out?

I look forward to hearing back from you soon! When you write, you can ask me any more questions of what you want to know about me too. I hope you're having a great year.

All the best,

Lauren