

## Considerations in Choosing Your New Cat

Caring for a cat brings many years of unconditional companionship and joy to our lives. Choosing the right cat for your home is essential to avoid behavioral problems that can make for a rocky relationship with your pet. Whether to adopt a kitten or an adult cat, take in a stray, select a male or a female, or have more than one cat are just a couple of the important questions to ask before making a decision that will last 15 to 20 years.

Many behavioral problems (not health related) with adult cats stem from improper socialization at a very young age. This should be realized when taking in an abandoned kitten that may not be fully weaned. If possible, a kitten this young should be introduced to adult cats as soon as possible in order to receive socialization skills and discipline that a human can not communicate. Bottle raised kittens have reputations for being aggressive toward people and other pets.

All healthy kittens are playful and silly. Their antics are necessary practice for learning hunting skills. Being nocturnal animals, kittens may practice a lot at night while you are trying to sleep. A cat's true personality is not well revealed to an owner until adulthood. While having a kitten can be a lot of fun, some owners may choose to adopt an adult cat with an easy going, calm demeanor and forego the rambunctious kitten stage.

Whether to choose a male or female cat is a purely personal preference. Some people's personalities better mesh with one or the other. Spend time with numerous cats of both sexes to see if you prefer one over another. Males may tend to be a little more social with people and other pets, but this stereotype does not always hold true.

Cats adopted from shelters are usually mixed breeds. If you want to purchase a specific cat breed, be sure to do some research about any health problems or behaviors to which the cat may be predisposed. You will also want to get references from the breeder to be sure they are reputable. Consider the hundreds of thousands of homeless kitties in shelters each year before purchasing a cat just because you like the markings or body shape.

Two cats can give each other company, but three or more cats can lead to conflicts. Cats have strict hierarchies and territories. Introducing a new cat into the multiple cat household can upset the established boundaries. A trial adoption may want to be considered, if possible, to test the cats' interactions.

Of course, it is most important to be sure that a new cat is healthy. It should have a thorough veterinary examination before taking it home and exposing other pets. The cat's eyes will be bright and clear, and its coat will be shiny and well groomed. There should be no discharge from the nose, eyes, or ears. Stools should be formed. The doctor will check the cat for intestinal parasites, viral diseases like leukemia, and external parasites like ear mites and ringworm.