

PETS

Choosing the Right Cat: Find Your Perfect Feline Friend

Behavior traits in cats don't vary as much as dogs, but each cat has a distinct personality. These tips can help you discover which cat will be your perfect pet.

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Is a cat right for you?

So, you've decided to get a cat. Congratulations—having a cat can give you years of love and companionship. People with pets also tend to be happier, healthier, and better adjusted than those without.

While cat behavioral traits do not vary as widely as those of dogs, each cat is definitely an individual—just ask anyone who has a feline companion or two. Ultimately, looks and personality are usually the deciding factors when selecting a particular cat.

Before you choose a cat, though, it's important to decide if a cat is the right pet for you.

Do you have other pets in your household? When your household already contains other pets, especially a dog, carefully consider whether a cat will be a welcome addition. While some dogs get along well with a cat, others may not. Even other cats may not be thrilled about sharing their space and your attention—although it's likely they will eventually bond. Introducing any new animal to a preexisting dynamic takes time, patience, and finesse.

Are you ready for a long-term commitment? When you adopt a cat, keep in mind that you'll be making a commitment that will last the lifetime of the cat—perhaps 10, 15, or 20 years.

How to choose the perfect cat

Once you've decided to bring a cat into your life, the next step is to figure out what kind of cat you want. There are 42 types of purebred cats recognized by the Cat Fancier's Association, as well as a myriad of mixed-breed cats.

There are a few factors to consider in your decision process for choosing a cat. Age, size, breed, appearance, and personality can all play into your individual preferences.

The differences between different breeds

Different breeds have specific characteristics, appearances, and needs. For example, Persians are more lovey-dovey lap cats, but require regular grooming to keep their long hair from matting.

Siamese cats tend to be vocal, but are more standoffish. Main coons are big, relaxed cats that will follow you around, but don't like to be babied. Still, any house cat, even the more aloof breeds, will crave and appreciate your love and attention—when they want it.

[\[Read: The Joys of Owning a Cat\]](#)

Kitten or mature cat?

While a kitten may be adorable, they do require a lot of work. Kittens need to be litter-box trained, and can often be very needy and energetic. Their tiny size also is a consideration, especially if there are any rambunctious children or other pets living in your household.

On the other hand, older cats may be set in their ways, and have personalities that developed in conjunction with their last owner. Cats are very adaptable, however, and most will adjust very quickly to new environments and people.

When deciding between adopting a kitten or a mature adult cat, consider the following traits:

Physical fortitude

Kitten: Delicate. More easily injured or harmed.

Mature adult cat: Sturdier. Better able to escape danger.

Energy level

Kitten: Very active, mischievous.

Mature adult cat: More relaxed, less likely to get into trouble.

Time and attention

Kitten: More time required to train and feed.

Mature adult cat: Already trained. Feeding schedule easier.

Safety problems

Kitten: Less aware of its surroundings. May get under foot.

Mature adult cat: More aware of its surroundings. Able to avoid problems.

Shorthaired cat or longhaired cat?

When choosing between a shorthaired cat and one with long hair, think about the practical considerations. Although all cats need to be brushed regularly—and most actually enjoy it—frequent grooming of longhaired cats is a necessity to keep them mat free.

If you don't have time or an interest in daily grooming of a cat, you may prefer a short-haired variety. If you like the look of a long-haired cat, make sure that you are prepared for the care and upkeep it will require.

Purebred or mixed breed?

Cat fanciers who enjoy participating in cat shows and organized feline activities may prefer purebreds. But for those that are looking for a stay-at-home companion, a cat is usually selected based on appearance and personality, whether it is purebred or not.

Mixed breed cats are far more common than the purebreds, and are considerably less expensive to obtain.

Where to find the right cat

Once you've narrowed down your choices, where do you find the cat of your dreams?

Purebred cats can be purchased from breeders and at some pet shops, or adopted from a rescue group. Sometimes you may even find a purebred cat at an animal shelter. Mixed breeds cats (and sometimes kittens) are abundant at shelters and rescue groups. The experience you'll have when visiting each of the sources for your new cat will vary greatly.

Breeders

Breeders are the best place to find a purebred cat, including "exotic" domestic cats—such as the Bengal or Serengeti. Responsible breeders will encourage you to visit their facilities—often a home—to meet and interact

with their cats. Reputable breeders want to make sure that their animals are a good match with the people purchasing them and that they will be living in a healthy, loving environment.

- **Advantages:** You'll often get to meet the parents of the kitten. Health guarantees, instructions for care, and follow-up advice on training and behavior problems are usually offered to you.
- **Disadvantages:** Costly, but less so than pet shops. If animals are confined to cages, conditions are unsanitary, and many different breeds are produced, the breeder may not be reputable.

Rescue organizations

Rescue organizations literally rescue "homeless" cats and kittens. Although some rescues have facilities where the animals are housed, most do not. Instead, until "forever homes" can be found, the cats and kittens live in foster homes, at boarding facilities, or veterinary offices. In these places the animals are screened and observed for health problems and problematic behaviors.

Rescues hold adoption events in parks, pet stores, or parking lots, usually on weekends, to give the public opportunities to meet available cats and kittens. Most rescues post photos and descriptions of their animals online, so you can see the cats before you contact the organization. Many rescues are careful about where pets are placed, so a screening process may be involved.

- **Advantages:** Health and behavior of cats/kittens is screened. After observing the cat, the rescue may know of a cat's particular likes, dislikes and problem behaviors. Adoption fees (donations) vary from nominal to costly.
- **Disadvantages:** A rigorous screening process of the prospective adoptee and an adoption agreement or contract may be required.

Animal shelters

Animal shelters are funded and operated by a city, county, or private, often nonprofit organizations. They are a wonderful place to find an adult cat, and many have kittens as well. Visiting an animal shelter can be depressing, with so many cats kept in less than ideal conditions and confined in cages resting side by side.

Hang around the cat cages and notice the different personalities of the cats and their reactions to you—although they may be more passive and less social because of the shelter environment. When a particular cat appeals to you, ask an adoption counselor to assist you. As you spend time with a cat or kitten, notice if they are comfortable being held and stroked.

- **Advantages:** Nominal adoption fees. Spaying/neutering and vaccinations included. Volunteers often assess cat's behavior and friendliness, and may be available to assist you if problems arise after adoption.
- **Disadvantages:** No health guarantees, although existing serious problems may be diagnosed. Unknown history of cat/kitten's previous care and treatment.

Settling in with your new cat or kitten

- Before bringing your new cat home, purchase all of the items you'll need to provide the best care and comfort for her.
- Have a cat carrier ready to take your new cat home in—a cat should never ride loose in a car.
- It may help to prepare a small area (a closet or bathroom) where your cat can stay for the first few days until she feels more comfortable. Leave water, food, a litter box and some toys, and let her adjust on her own time.
- If you are concerned about the cat scratching up your furniture, invest in a good scratching post—it can be a couch's best friend!
- Meet with family members to agree upon who will be responsible for which aspects of the cat's care and how the transition period will be handled.
- Find a good veterinarian. Get references from other pet owners or search online for reputable, well-reviewed vets.
- Take your new pet to the vet as soon as possible for an examination, as well as to establish a relationship with the vet, which will be ongoing. Discovering any existing or serious health problems as quickly as possible gives you options. Sadly—and although it is rare—there might be instances when a pet's health is so seriously compromised that keeping it would be beyond your capabilities. It's best to know before you get too attached.
- Understand that everyone in your household, including the pet, will need a little time to get to know each other and adjust to new elements in their lives.
- Some experts believe it's best to keep house cats safely indoors from the time you bring them home and that they'll never miss going outside.
- Notice ways in which your life is enriched by your new cat's presence, and start enjoying a wonderful, rewarding new relationship with your pet.

[\[Read: The Health and Mood-Boosting Benefits of Pets\]](#)

Find the perfect cat

In the U.S.	Find your new best friend from a network of over 11,500 shelters and rescues. (Petfinder) Find a pet from shelters, rescues, and individuals. (Adopt a pet)
UK	Search RSPCA rehoming centres .
Australia	AdoptaPet (RSPCA Australia)
Worldwide	Use the worldwide shelter directory to search for animal shelters, animal rescue groups, and other animal sheltering facilities in your country. (Hugs Society)

More Information

Helpful links

01. [Let's help you find a breeder](#) - Search CFA-recognized breeders of pedigreed cats. (The Cat Fanciers' Association)
02. [Choosing a cat](#) - Advice from the UK's largest feline welfare charity. (Cats Protection)

References

01. "Breeds – The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc." Accessed March 29, 2023.
02. The Humane Society of the United States. "Adopting Pets from Animal Shelters or Rescues." Accessed March 29, 2023.
03. ScienceDaily. "Stress Reduction Benefits from Petting Dogs, Cats." Accessed May 9, 2022.