

## Getting a New Kitten or Cat

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You have decided it is time to get a new kitten. Or you were walking through one of the local pet stores with pets available for adoption and one just jumped into your heart and said "TAKE ME HOME".

Before you jump into this there are things you should consider.

If you are going to go out looking for a new pet you need to decide. Do you want a purebred or a random bred pet (domestic)? With a purebred you have a better chance of knowing what you will be getting in your adult companion. Please notice I said chance. There are no hard and fast rules for temperament and health with the breeds. However, you know that with an American Shorthair you will probably get a sturdy, outgoing, long-lived pet with relatively easy coat care. With a Persian you will get a sturdy, outgoing, possibly higher maintenance pet with lots of coat care. There are several breeds where longevity has been lost through the introduction of lethal genes. You need to know the facts about the breed that has caught your fancy. Go to a local cat show and look at the various breeds. Pick your breeder carefully. Go with someone who is open and informative about the breed and kitty you are looking at. They should be able to tell you if the kitten you are looking at has the qualities you are looking for. All breeds have genetic defects, then again, so do random bred cats but you have no clue what you might be dealing with when you start with an ill street cat. I am not putting domestics down. They can be sweet, amazingly beautiful and healthy as can be. You just have a better chance of getting those qualities in a purebred.

There are general rules to picking a cat or kitten no matter where they come from.

1. The pet should be healthy looking to you. DO NOT do a mercy buy or rescue. That can lead to many years of expensive veterinary care you weren't bargaining for. Do not take home a cat or kitten with runny eyes, a stuffy nose, areas of hair loss or crusty ears. Or any other kind of sick you can see. Stressed cats are prone to chronic diseases; don't go there if you don't have to.
2. Is it tested for Feline Leukemia and Feline Aids? If your heart says you must take one home that hasn't been tested, keep it AWAY FROM your other cats. These diseases are always fatal. Get them to your veterinarian as fast as you can and get that done. Depending on where the kitten/cat comes from another test may be suggested in 21 days, the incubation period of these two nasty diseases. Bad enough to have to possibly euthanize one precious baby, let alone accidentally killing all your other cats. Yes, I have seen that happen.
3. Has it been tested and treated for parasites? Many breeders and shelters do not do fecals. They shotgun treat all incoming animals for the most common intestinal parasites. This could infect others in your home with what wasn't treated for. In some cases this also includes you and your family since many parasites are also infectious to humans. The cat appreciates you taking in a fresh stool sample rather than having the vet dig one out while you are at the office.
4. There is a disease that there is no accurate test for-Feline Infectious Peritonitis. Because tests can give you a false positive or a false negative there is no accurate way for any veterinarian to tell you if the new apple of your eye is a feline Typhoid Mary or not. When you get a new pet it is best if you have other cats to keep the newcomer isolated for about 30 days. Put the newbie in an area where you will visit often and can comfortably spend time together. This allows the new pet to become acquainted under the door with the current residents so there is less fighting when the door eventually opens. It also stressed the new pet. Stress causes the FIP to pop. Stress is a new home, new owners, strange animals on the other side of the door and not having free run of the house. It is not mean to the new kitty and may save the lives of others if you have them.

5. If you have a new baby kitten it is a good idea to have a kitten proof room ready even if you have no other pets. Baby kittens are like babies who have just learned to crawl. Everything goes in their mouths! Unplug light chords (electrocution) or bind them in such a way that little teeth cannot chew into them. Tie up the cords on the blinds (Hanging). Have several potties available with different kinds of litter in them that is non-clumping (intestinal obstruction). This way you can figure out what the kitten likes to use and there is less chance of inappropriate elimination. Only let the kitten have the run of the house when you can watch it. Like little kids, kittens play on even though they know they have to potty. They are having so much fun they wait until the last minute to potty and then they start for the potty. Trouble is, they don't always leave themselves enough time to get to the potty. Then they go on the rug, or whatever is soft and they can scratch on. This sets a precedent for later carpet abuse.