

Don't Adopt 1 of These Low-Maintenance Pets 'Til You Check Off These 5 Points

Or you could accidentally create a high-maintenance nightmare for yourself. And it can be harder to extricate yourself than you think. So make sure you can say 'check' to each of these five points before proceeding past 'go.' Then you can enjoy the love without painful regrets.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- There are almost 90 million pet cats living in households across the U.S.
- Most potential adopters visit local shelters or rescues to find a cat, but sometimes they aren't quite prepared to take on a new feline family member
- Unless you're prepared to invest the time, effort and money necessary to properly care for a cat for her lifetime, things can quickly sour
- Common mistakes potential cat adopters make include ignoring the needs of an existing pet, adopting on a whim and insisting on a kitten
- Shelters have lots of wonderful mature cats waiting for homes, and there are far fewer surprises when you adopt an adult

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published September 20, 2016.

According to the 2015 to 2016 APPA (American Pet Products Association) National Pet Owners Survey, the estimated number of pet kitties in the U.S. is 85.8 million.¹ That's nearly 10 million more cats than dogs! Those millions of feline family members live in roughly one-third of all U.S. households.

There are so many reasons to share life with a cat that it's no wonder they're such popular companions. Compared to many other types of pets, kitties are clean, quiet (most of the time) and relatively low maintenance. And despite their reputation for being aloof, many are every bit as affectionate as dogs.

To keep things interesting, despite their long history as pets, cats have mysteriously retained many of the traits of their wild cousins, which makes them captivating in both appearance and behavior. It's also impossible to know what they're thinking most of the time, which somehow just adds to their appeal!

If you're considering adopting a new — or another — kitty from your local shelter or rescue, you know it's one of the most significant commitments you will make in your lifetime.

Accepting responsibility for caring for another life that will be totally dependent on you isn't something to take lightly. And you'll want to avoid making the following common cat adoption mistakes.

5 Common Cat Adoption Mistakes

1. **Overlooking the needs of your current pet** — It's crucially important to plan ahead if you already have a pet and want to add a cat to the household. Many animals can learn to get along or at least tolerate each other over time, but there are situations in which it's just too dangerous or stressful to keep two poorly matched pets under the same roof.

Unfortunately, bringing a new cat into a home with an existing cat is frequently one of those "situations." Give some thought to how your current cat might react to a new cat. If in the past, he's shown aggression or fear around other kitties, you could be setting the stage for a problem.

It's a good idea to try to match the temperament and energy level of a new cat with that of your existing cat to improve the chances the two will get along. If things don't go well initially, consult with an animal behavior specialist before throwing in the towel on adopting a second cat.

Often, it just takes some time and a few helpful tips to put an existing pet and a new one on the road to a harmonious relationship.

2. **Impulse adoptions** — Sadly, many pets are acquired on a whim, without thought or preparation. Your heart may be in the right place, but unless you're prepared to invest the time, effort and money necessary to properly care for a cat for her lifetime, things can quickly sour.

In those cases, and there are far too many of them, the animal is the inevitable loser. Shelters are full of pets that were the result of an impulse purchase or adoption.

Questions to ask yourself: "Can I afford to properly care for a cat?" "Is anyone in the family allergic to cats?" "Does my landlord allow them?" And, "Do I have the time available to give her the time, attention and care she will need?"

3. **Ignoring adoptable adult or senior cats** — Many prospective adopters feel a kitten is the only way to go, and that's unfortunate. Shelters have lots of wonderful mature cats waiting for homes, and there are far fewer surprises when you adopt an adult. For example, you already know how big he'll get, and the color and length of his coat.

Since he has a history, it's possible you can learn from shelter staff about his health status, whether or not he gets along with other pets, or how sociable he is. With kittens, you're rolling the dice.

Older cats are also usually well beyond the search-and-destroy kitten phase. Chances are your adult cat will have no desire to excavate your potted plants or shred the Christmas quilt grandma made for you.

4. **Avoiding black cats** — Sadly, black pets are among the most overlooked in shelters. Hopefully, you don't still (or never did) believe the silly myth that black cats bring bad luck, because it's utter nonsense!

Another reason it can be hard to find homes for black kitties is because their faces don't appear as expressive as those of lighter-colored cats, but rest assured that's entirely attributable to their dark coloring and not their personalities!

If you've got your eye on a black cat, you might ask the shelter staff if they offer discounts on adoption fees for black pets. Many shelters do, because they're aware of the difficulties involved in placing these animals.

5. **Not thinking long-term** — What changes do you expect in your life in the next five, 10 or 15 years? While we can't predict the future, most of us have a vision for our lives that extends years down the road.

These days, it's not unusual for a well cared-for cat to live into her late teens or early 20s, so adoption means taking on a multi-year commitment. It's important to be reasonably sure your lifestyle will be as pet-friendly in five, 10 or 20 years as it is today.

5 Reasons Cats Make Great Pets

1. **Housebreaking takes about a minute** — Just place a litter box with clean litter in an out-of-the-way spot in your home, and watch the magic happen!
2. **You can remain a clean freak** — No need to worry about a grubby, stinky kitty rolling around on your carpet or bed. Healthy felines keep themselves clean from head to toe.
3. **No guilt trips** — Unlike a canine companion who will look at you with sad puppy dog eyes when you can't stop what you're doing to play with him, if you need to put Tiger off for a bit, he'll wander away and sneak in a nap.
4. **It's always go-time** — Most kitties don't enjoy trips in the car or visits to the vet, but if you have a cat carrier, it's a whole lot easier to coax an unwilling 12-pound cat to come along than an obstinate 50- or 60-pound pooch.
5. **You can stay warm, even in January** — As most folks owned by cats can attest, there's nothing that compares to the coziness of a kitty curled up in your lap, draped around your neck or perched atop your head as you recline in your favorite easy chair.

Sources and References

[VetStreet April 27, 2016](#)

¹ [APPA.org](#)
