



Right Cat; Right Fit. How to Choose the Right Cat for You.

The decision to bring home a new cat should never be made on a whim. Depending on the age of the cat you're planning to adopt the cat will be a commitment for a few years up to perhaps twenty years, and there will be challenges and medical bills along the way, so think carefully before you make the decision to adopt. If you are considering adopting, here are some basic things to consider first.

The Cost of Cat Ownership

We don't want to discourage anyone from adopting a cat, but let's be realistic. Food, treats, toys and other supplies, litter, and veterinary bills cost money. If you're adopting a cat for the first time, the investment in cat trees, litter boxes, toys, and other start-up items can add up. Factor in an annual exam for your cat, as well as money for unexpected illnesses or accidents. Make sure you can afford to care for your cat for the long term, and don't forget to factor in pet insurance if you want to have a safety net for medical care.

Breed & Lifestyle Fit

This is one of the most important factors as a starting point in selecting the right cat. Are you home a lot? Or are you and everyone in the house out working or at school a lot of the time? Do you want a Velcro kitty or will you be happier with a more independent cat? Does the length of hair matter to you – long, medium, or short-haired? Are you willing and able, or even anxious, to care for a special needs cat – one who might be missing an eye, a limb, or need special food or regular medication, a cat with FIV or FELV; These cats are often overlooked. When making your decision, consider the health and safety of your other pets, children, and older relatives.



Size & Age

Lifestyle and your own physical limitations can help determine what age of cat may be appropriate for you. Be realistic. Depending on the cat's age, you may be making a commitment to an animal for 15-20 years. Older people need the companionship of a cat in their lives too, but there needs to be a concrete plan for the cat should you no longer be able to care for it.

- **Kittens**



Kittens are utterly delightful, but they require extra care, not to mention kitten-proofing your home. Because they are young, and their immune systems are not as developed illnesses, should they happen, require immediate care. Kittens can also be a tripping hazard for both very young children and older adults, for whom falls can turn serious. Kittens need lots of attention and appropriate handling and play; what you put into a kitten now is what you will get out of the cat in the long run. Because kittens under six months are still developing and learning, and need help doing that from another cat, we do recommend adopting two kittens together or bringing a kitten into a home with another young or playful cat.

- **Adult Cats**

Unlike kittens, whose personalities are still developing, you know much better exactly what kind of cat you're adopting. Because Castaway's cats all spend some time in our foster homes, you'll be in touch with a foster who knows their likes and dislikes, their energy level, the interest (or not) in cuddling.

- **Senior Cats**

Senior cats can be an excellent choice for those in search of a lower energy cat whose personality is already well-developed. While they may have greater medical needs as they age then fit into households more easily in many cases and are usually very grateful for simple companionship. For those that understand that age is just a number, the rewards of welcoming a senior cat are many.

Activity Level

Despite what many may think, cats needs regular exercise, socialization, and mental stimulation. Cats don't usually need nearly the amount of time playing and interacting with people and other pets as dogs do – they don't need daily walks for instance – but they do need playtimes with interactive toys and attention from their people. Kittens needs lots and lots of both, and require a good investment of time if you're to have a great cat in the future. All cats, even senior ones, need social time and mental stimulation (think food puzzles, hidden treats, etc.) but the need to active playtime will decrease as a cat ages and their physical abilities change. Be realistic about the time you have to spend with your newly adopted cat.

The Multi-Cat Home

If you already have one or more cats in your home, give some thought to how an additional feline is going to affect the ones you already have. Integrating new cats into a home with resident cats takes time and patience; sometimes it goes well, and sometimes it isn't terrific. If you have a senior cat, consider how that cat will respond to a kitten who constantly wants to disturb the naps of the senior cat. If you have an adult cat, consider the age and temperament of the cat, and whether he or she really wants a buddy, and if so, what kind of buddy. Ultimately, the decision to adopt a cat needs to take into consideration the needs of the cats already resident in the home.



Grooming

Short-haired cats generally don't need grooming unless they are obese and can't reach parts of their body. But if you're set on adopting a long-haired cat, be prepared to brush the cat daily to prevent mats from forming. If you're having trouble keeping your cat's fur groomed, you might need the help of a professional groomer.

Many of the applications we receive say they will only consider a particular color, age, or gender; many times we are told an applicant will only consider a kitten, or has fallen in love with a picture online and won't consider anything else. All we can say is to keep an open mind, listen to what the cat's foster has to say about the cat and how that might fit with your own lifestyle and home. You're more likely to find just the right cat that ends up being the perfect fit.