

## SELECTING A CAT FOR ADOPTION

We are happy that you have decided to add a cat to your household. There are so many lovely cats to choose from- ranging greatly in age and temperament. Now is the time to think about what type of cat would best fit into your lifestyle. Below are some of the factors we think wise to consider before you bring home your new feline.

### Your Household's Experience Level

If you have never had the pleasure of a feline in your home, you will need to be initiated gently! Though a kitten seems non-threatening and oh-so-cute, they are babies and need lots of time and attention. Kittens usually require more training in household manners, and the home will need to be kitten-proofed so that they cannot injure themselves, as they will get into everything! Also, a kitten will develop a personality based on learning **and** on genes, and the personality may be one that you didn't plan for or are not ready for. It certainly could be an OK match if your heart is set on it, if you have time on your hands and a willingness to learn. An adult cat with the right personality will be easier and more predictable, however.

If you are well versed in feline ways, you have many options. You will be able to take on a cat with behavior issues such as nipping or hiding- we will help you out on how to work with these common problems.

### Do You Have Children?

If the human members of your family are young, say under 12, we recommend that you avoid cats who are skittish or easily startled by noises and activity. You should also avoid cats with a history of aggression.

Though kittens are cute and so playful, they are not always good matches for households with young children (say under 7 or so.) Kittens are fragile physically and need very consistent and gentle handling. They can develop serious behavior problems if not raised with consistency and care by all members of the household.

### Type Of Home

If you have a small apartment, we would advise a less active cat (and probably over the age of 5.) If you have a large house with multiple bedrooms, you will want to avoid an overly fearful cat- that much space may be overwhelming, and they may spend a majority of time hiding.

### Lifestyle

Are you home a lot, or gone all day? All cats need daily attention, both petting and interactive playtime, but some cats need more! If you are gone all day, you should think twice about getting a young kitten or a needy cat. Behavior problems (such as biting, scratching, and destructive behavior) are common if cats are under-stimulated. A more independent temperament may suit your lifestyle better.

You could also think about getting two cats instead of one, so they can provide stimulation and company for each other. An excellent option is to adopt cats that have come into the shelter as a pair, and have a history of getting along well. Barring that, you could adopt one cat now, then come back in a month or two, after your cat has settled in, and adopt a suitable companion.

If you often have company over, you would do well choosing an outgoing cat who will enjoy the extra attention. A shy cat would be overwhelmed by lots of social gatherings, and would likely hide.

Consider the grooming needs of your new cat as well. A longhaired cat is going to need more attention to its' coat- thorough brushing anywhere from once daily to a minimum of twice a week is necessary.

### **Personality Preference**

Do you have an idea of what type of personality you like in a cat? Are you looking for a very playful cat, or a lap cat? While it can be difficult to tell how your new cat will be in a home, we do have personality profiles that will let you know what we have observed here. If a cat is a “lap cat” in this setting, it is likely to be in a home as well. (Remember that some of these cats will fall into the “needy” category!) If a cat is very high-energy here, it is likely to be high-energy in a home. On the other hand, a cat who is mildly shy here may very well become less shy (and potentially more active) over time in a stable home. So, take these factors into consideration when you are looking.

### **Do You Have A Dog?**

If you have a cat-friendly dog, you will want either a kitten (needs lots of supervision with dog), a confident adult cat, or an adult cat who has a history of enjoying life with a dog. Avoid very fearful cats, declawed cats, and otherwise disabled cats (such as three-legged) unless you have a very small and docile dog. Make sure you have the time and space to introduce the two gradually. You should also be willing to make practical changes to your environment as needed, such as blocking your dog's access to the litterbox, and installing safety gates.

### **Do You Have Other Cats?**

It is best to match temperaments, and stay within the same age group, when adopting a second cat. If you have a playful, active cat at home, you will need one who can put up with and maybe even enjoy that level of energy. Likewise, if you have a mellow older cat at home, don't bring home a hyper, aggressive kitten! We have cats up for adoption who have demonstrated goodwill towards other felines- you may want to start by looking at some of these kitties, especially if you are not sure if your cat at home is good with other cats. It is important to realize that no matter who you decide upon, it will take time, and space to separate the cats, in order to make gradual introductions. Cats are territorial animals, and often take weeks or months to adjust to another cat in their space.

### **Indoor Vs. Outdoors**

Indoor cats live safer and longer lives, and avoid such hazards as being hit by cars or contracting fatal diseases such as FIV (Feline Immune-deficiency Virus) and FeLV (Feline Leukemia) from neighborhood cats. We encourage people to look into alternatives to letting their cats roam the streets, such as fencing in your yard with special cat-proof fencing (see our handout) or perhaps harness-training and “walking” your cat. However, if you are determined that your kitty go outdoors solo, you should avoid white cats (they can get skin cancer) and skittish cats (they are more likely to run away, and very difficult to find if hiding.) Cats that have been declawed should never be let outdoors, as they are unable to adequately defend themselves and often have impaired ability to climb.

### **We Hope This Information Helps You In Your Search For A Cat Companion!**

The Cat Behavior Program has more literature on finding a cat that may get along with your current pets, and on individual behavior concerns.

If you have further questions, please phone the SF/SPCA Cat Behavior Helpline at  
(415) 554-3075 or email [catbehavior@sfsPCA.org](mailto:catbehavior@sfsPCA.org)