



June is Adopt-A-Cat month!

(If it's not June when you're reading this...don't let that stop you.)

Thousands of kitties across the nation are waiting for a permanent home. It's the perfect time to make new family members. This checklist is courtesy of the American Humane Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), CATalyst Council, and Petfinder.

1. Consider more than one cat. Cats require exercise, mental stimulation, and social interaction. Two cats can provide this for each other.

2. Find a cat whose personality meshes with yours. In general, cats with long hair and round heads and bodies are more easygoing than lean cats with narrow heads and short hair, who are typically more active. Adoption counselors can offer advice to help you match the individual cat's personality with your own.

3. Schedule a veterinary visit within the first few days after the adoption. Make sure to bring along any medical records you received from the adoption center. According to Dr. Larry Kornegay, president of the AVMA, getting your new cat to a veterinarian early will help make sure there are no underlying illnesses or injuries and allow you to develop a plan to help your new pet live the happiest, healthiest, longest life possible.

4. Make sure everyone in the house is prepared for a new cat. Visiting the shelter or animal control facility should be a family affair. When adopting a new cat to join your existing pets, discuss with the adoption facility or your veterinarian how to make a proper introduction.

5. Budget for both short-term and long-term costs. A cat adopted from a shelter may be a bargain, considering many shelters provide spaying or neutering, initial vaccines, and a microchip. But make sure you're prepared for the routine expenses you'll incur throughout the cat's life.

6. Stock up on supplies before the cat arrives. Try to create a homelike environment for your new cat right away. You'll need a litter box, litter, food and water bowls, food, scratching posts, safe and stimulating toys, a cushy bed, a brush for grooming, a toothbrush, and nail clippers.

7. Cat-proof your home. A new cat will quickly teach you not to leave things lying out. Food left on the kitchen counter will teach your new friend to jump on counters for a possible lunch. Get rid of loose items your cat might chew on, make sure the cat isn't chewing on electrical cords, and pick up random items like paper clips, which kittens may swallow.

8. Go slowly when introducing your cat to new friends and family. It can take several weeks for a cat to relax in a new environment. It's a great idea to keep the new addition secluded in a single room with all of its supplies until it's used to the new surroundings. Socialization is important, but remember: take it slow.

9. Include your new pet in your family's emergency plan. Add phone numbers for your veterinarian and closest 24-hour animal hospital to your "in-case-of-emergency" call list, and be sure to have a several-day supply of cat food and medications on hand.

10. Think twice before giving a cat as a gift. While it's a nice thought, surprising someone with a cat doesn't allow for a "get-to-know-one-another" period. Remember, adopting a cat isn't like purchasing a household appliance or a piece of jewelry—this is a real living, breathing, and emotional being.

