



What You Need to Know About Adopting a Kitten

One of the biggest and most exciting times in anyone's life is when he or she gets a new pet for the home, and this is particularly true if you're adopting a kitten. Not only do you have the prospect of having a cute little bundle of fun coming into your life, it's also a big commitment for the next 12-15 years or more. Therefore, making sure you're fully prepared beforehand will go a long way to making sure both you and your home are ready for your new addition.

The Basics

The first thing you need to do is make sure that you have the basics sorted out – after all, imagine how put out your little kitten will be if he or she arrives and they don't even have a toilet to use! And they certainly won't have a great first impression if they have nothing to eat after their long journey either...

So, to avoid getting off on the wrong foot with the little guy, make sure you at least have a litter tray, litter, cat food and some little toys to make him or her feel at home immediately. Trust us, you'll be thankful you did when you don't have to wash the carpet for the umpteenth time!

The Financial Outlay

Perhaps one of the things that take people by surprise the most is how much a kitten actually costs. Just like a car, it's not the getting of it, but the upkeep. As well as having the basics covered – food, litter, dishes, toys, etc – you also need to take into account the ongoing cost of caring for a kitten as it grows up.

This comes in the way of shots and vaccinations, as well as worming and flea medication. For instance, vets recommend that cats be de-wormed every 6 months, so you need to make sure you're aware of this ongoing commitment.

Additionally, kittens have to have a whole host of treatment in the first year, including neutering or spaying. And that's not counting the unexpected medical problems that might pop up – are mites, for example, is particularly common amongst kittens, even indoor ones. And at around \$300 to eliminate the problem, adopting a kitten can soon turn into an expensive venture. Of course, as soon as they look at you with their big eyes and little head, they could ask for caviar and the finest cream and you won't care about the cost!

Where Should You Adopt Your Kitten?

Once you've added up the extra cost involved in having your new family member, the next thing to decide is where you're going to adopt it. Depending on both your financial situation and your requirements, the decision can pretty much be made for you. If you're just after a kitten that will be a family pet and no more, then you can adopt it from somewhere like an animal shelter or humane society.

This is an especially beneficial approach for both sides – you're helping to give a good home to an unwanted kitten, and the shelter can use the space to house another stray or abandoned cat. Additionally, a shelter will both advise and check you at the same time, so they can be sure that your kitten is going to a home that both wants it and is ready for it. If you do get a kitten from a shelter, you'll usually pay around \$100; however, your new pet will have had all required shots and will probably be neutered or spayed as well, so the cost is covered that way.

You can also adopt from a regular pet store, although this may not be the best approach since they can often sell purebreds as well as tabby cats, and as such may not be able to offer you the best advice. Even the local newspaper will have advertisements that offer "free to good home", so look in there.

If you're looking at a more serious proposition, and want a kitten that will grow into a show cat for various shows, then you need to go to a purebred breeder. This is quite an in-depth process, and involves getting your kitten's history, breed, parentage and ancestry and much more. It will give you an excellent idea of your kitten's potential temperament; however, with even the most inexpensive of purebreds running into several hundred dollars, this is normally just for the dedicated breeder.

How Old Should The Kitten Be?

Although a newborn kitten may be cute and fun to watch as it chases a ball around a room, they need to be left alone until they're old enough to be taken away from the mother. This is for two reasons – they need the nourishment that their mother's milk provides, and the first 10 weeks are also the times that kittens learn all their habits and mannerisms from their mother.

Therefore, the very bare minimum that a kitten should be before joining your family is 10 weeks old, although many breeders recommend that you actually wait 10-12 weeks. Of course, once a new kitten starts having a hankering for daddy's favorite socks or mom's favorite curtains, you'll probably think that 20 weeks is too soon! This is why so many people prefer taking an older kittens, as there's usually less training involved.

Preparing For The Kitten's Arrival

Although you know what basics you should have, you can never be too prepared to welcome the new arrival into your home. So before you even go to the shelter or breeder that you're going to pick your kitten up from, you should make sure that the following items are in your home:

- *Litter tray and cat litter (trust us, this one is very important unless you like cleaning!). For kittens, make sure it's a non-clumping litter*
- *Scratching post. Almost as important as a litter tray, for obvious reasons*
- *Food and water bowls. It's a good idea to get 2 or 3 water bowls, and spread them around your house. It encourages your kitten to drink, as they often forget, believe it or not!*
- *A cat carrier for any trips you need to take to the vet*
- *Toys*
- *Cat bed (or if you really want to spoil your kitten, a hammock)*
- *Cat food. Obviously. Make sure it's kitten food though, since this has the extra nutrients that your little guy needs to grow.*

And that's it. Simple, huh? So, now that you're prepared for the cost and the training and the patience and the de-worming... it's time to adopt your kitten. Happy hunting, and remember – this is just the beginning of a beautiful relationship!

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