

Cat Individuality

A cat's individual personality, temperament and behaviour patterns need to fit in with your family's lifestyle and should be among the main considerations when choosing a cat.

For example, a playful and energetic kitten might not be the best choice for a family with a senior cat that suffers from arthritis and likes to spend time sleeping.



Choosing the right cat for your lifestyle

As personality and behaviour are affected by environmental factors (nurture), where you acquire your cat should be an important consideration. Choose a seller who has created an environment conducive to a healthy, happy upbringing or living situation. This is particularly important as unwanted behaviour is a common reason why cats are surrendered or abandoned. It is important to understand what you are looking for in a four-legged friend.

Firstly, to make sure that a cat is the right pet for you, and then to decide what kind of cat might suit your lifestyle. For example, an active young kitten needs an owner that has time to play with them regularly. Consider whether you can meet the needs of the cat –this will be in part determined by their personality. If not, your cat will suffer poor emotional wellbeing which can manifest as unwanted behaviours. These behaviours can also result in the inability to form a bond with your cat, leading to a further deterioration in their emotional wellbeing.

For more information on choosing the right cat for your family, visit: <https://www.waltham.com/resources/cat-care>





The best places to look for a cat are:

- A reputable breeder
- A registered cat shelter or adoption centre/organisation

It's usually best to avoid:

- Pet shops
- Unregistered sellers

Ideally, you should choose a cat from an environment that considers a wide variety of factors such as welfare, health, disease prevention (including responsible breeding and preventative care for both the parents and offspring), temperament, socialisation and genetic screening. The current owners should also prioritise matching cats and responsible families with well-suited lifestyles, and appropriate resident household pets.

Choosing the right cat from a reputable breeder

If acquiring a cat from a breeder, it is crucial to find a responsible one who prioritises breeding for good health and temperament, and creates a living environment that fosters healthy kitten development. Such breeders will perform genetic testing to screen parents for heritable health conditions if required and practise preventative care for both the parents and offspring. The breeder should provide adequate and appropriate socialisation, as well as healthy nutrition and enriching experiences for the kittens too. The breeder should also ask questions about you as well, to match the cat with the right family.



A responsible breeder should ask questions about you, to match the individual adult cat or kitten with the right family





Giving a cat who has been previously owned a home can be very rewarding

Choosing the right cat from a shelter or adoption centre

Most rehoming organisations will ask you questions to better understand your living situation, lifestyle and preferences. Their goal is to find a cat to best match you to ensure a successful adoption for both cat and human. This is important to help prevent behaviour problems such as aggression or inappropriate toileting behaviour that may arise from a cat living in an unsuitable environment with an owner who is unable to meet their needs (see [Health](#), and [Environment](#)).

Though keep in mind that the behaviour of a cat may be different in a home than in the commotion of a shelter. A new cat should be introduced to other pets gradually. Scent plays an important role in feline communication and swapping bedding, blankets or other items can help cats become familiar with one another before they even meet.

For more information on how to introduce your new cat to other pets, see [Socialisation](#).

Social spacing

Some shelters may allow a trial period to make sure your new cat truly fits in with your family including other pets. Individuality, including personality, will play a big role in both cat's compatibility and emotional wellbeing – just as humans work better with certain teammates and clash with others. Providing unrestricted access to essential resources (such as food, water, and litter trays) and the ability to establish social spacing are also important in establishing a happy multi-cat household (for more information see [Environment](#)).

Be sure to think about every aspect of your cat's personality and individuality so you can find the best match!

For more information on the benefits and considerations when adopting or fostering a new pet, [read this blog](#).





Best to avoid: Pet shops and unregistered sellers

Cats and kittens available in a pet store often come from cat owners who have had an unplanned litter. This is similar for cats sold through newspaper or internet adverts and can make it more difficult for new owners to learn about their early socialisation experiences, the health and personality of their cat's parents.

Kittens raised in a pet shop environment are often kept in small pens, which can greatly limit their opportunities to express natural behaviours like climbing, chasing and playing.

This, combined with limited exposure to positive socialisation experiences and interactions with other people and pets (see [Socialisation](#)), may make it more difficult for them to adjust confidently to a new home environment and express their individuality positively.

Important factors to consider

In some cases, kittens may not even receive access to routine preventative healthcare, such as vaccinations or deworming which can lead to serious health problems. Poor health and welfare conditions may also lead to high levels of stress that can even impact brain development in young animals – manifesting later in life as abnormal social and fear-related behaviour, as well as an inability to develop or express their true personality. This is why vigilance in visiting, inspecting and investigating the environment your new cat comes from and its history are so important.

It's important that cats are microchipped (and your details kept up to date) so that they may be easily reunited with you if they go missing.

This will also reduce the stress associated with being held in an unfamiliar environment, like the pound.





Top tips for picking the right cat:

- **Only buy or rehome a cat or kitten from a transparent seller.** The seller should also prioritise matching cats and responsible families, as much as possible, with well-suited lifestyles.
- **Ask lots of questions.** Cats Protection has compiled some useful tips, including how to select a kitten or cat and the questions to ask the seller or current owner:

[Cats Protection. Buying a Kitten.](#)

[Cats Protection. Adopt A Cat. Frequently Asked Questions](#)

- **Meet the cat's mum/parents if possible.** Having healthy and behaviourally sound parents is important for a cat's personality – for all breeds of cats and will, in part, influence how they cope in certain situations.



- **Watch your cat interacting with its current environment, other animals and people.** This will help you get a feel for their individual personality and characteristics. Remember to consider your other cats or pets and what trait types your new cat has that might fit in well. If possible, have the new cat meet your existing pets prior to acquisition.
- **Spend time with your future cat at home before committing where possible.** Fostering, sharing custody or having a trial period can both be great options to enable you to get to know your cat's individual characteristics and needs before making a permanent commitment. Remember as well that a cat's behaviour also tends to be different depending on their surroundings, for instance, a shelter environment compared to the home.

Learn more about individuality and emotional wellbeing for your pets at shine.waltham.com

