

PAWSOME CAT PARENTING

**20 ESSENTIAL TIPS
FOR NEW CAT PARENTS**



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Congratulations on welcoming your new cat into your life!

We know that you want to be the best cat parent you can be so we have compiled a handy guide of common mistakes many cat parents have made in the past and are sure you'll find it really useful, and give you lots to think about!

When adopting a cat it's important to understand that they need care and love for many years. Domestic cats can live up to 20 years old, or longer if you're really lucky! so getting a cat is a long-term commitment and a responsibility you should be happy to take on.

While cats are somewhat independent in nature, this does not mean that they don't need care. We want everyone who adopts a cat to be an awesome cat parent and have an amazing bond with their cat so, with that in mind, we have compiled a list of 20 common mistakes that new cat parents should avoid, in no particular order.

Here's to you, your new fur baby and many happy years together!





1 GETTING A KITTEN TOO YOUNG

The biggest mistake you could make is to adopt a kitten that is too young. Kittens should not be rehomed until they are at least eight weeks old. The mother-kitten relationship is vital to a kitten's development, and it's partly thanks to their mom that kittens grow into healthy, well-adjusted adults.

You should always get a kitten from a reputable breeder or animal shelter, not from people selling kittens online. This way you can be confident that you are not being duped into adopting a kitten that's too young, be supporting unscrupulous cat breeders who don't consider the health of the mother or kittens and can be confident in adopting a healthy cat. We do, however, understand that sometimes caring for a newborn kitten is unavoidable, for example in the case of their mother's death, but this is the exception.

2 NOT DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

Adopting a cat should never be something you do on impulse. You should consider all your options and make an educated and informed decision. Be sure to do your homework when it comes to the differences between breeds, cat behaviour, and know the basics of their care. You will also want to visit different shelters and be sure to ask lots of questions and gather as much information about the unique personality and history of your new cat.



3 RUSHING INTRODUCTIONS

Introducing your new cat to another furry household member too quickly could cause a lasting bad first impression that may never be overcome. Many people assume that if their current pet (cat or dog) has lived with another cat in the past, then everything will be fine when a new cat is introduced. This is not always the case, and time and care should be taken in these introductions.

Here are three easy steps to introduce your cat to each other:

Step 1: Give your new cat time to settle

Remember that your new cat needs time to settle so provide them with an area where they feel safe and can start to adjust to their new surroundings.

Keep your new cat in a separate room, to begin with, and ensure that there is no way that they can escape.

During this time give your new cat anything that your resident cat has slept or laid on and vice versa. This will make sure that each cat is getting used to the other's scent.

To help your existing cat feel more secure, take a damp cloth and rub it over their scent glands (these are on the cheekbones and the pads of their paws). Then rub the cloth over areas where they feel relaxed, such as windowsills, near radiators and certain chairs. This should be done at least twice a day and will reassure your cat that they can still smell their own scent in the areas that are important to them.

Your resident cat may lurk outside the room where the new cat is staying and sniff under the door. This building up of curiosity may mean it is actually a relief when the cats first get to see each other.



Step 2: Let them catch a glimpse of each other

After a day or so, when your new cat has settled, try wedging the door open an inch so they can glimpse each other. If that seems to go well, then you can move on to the next step.

Once settled (this could take a few days), allow your new cat time out of the room so that they can familiarise themselves with their new surroundings. Ensure that your old cat cannot meet them during this time

Step 3: Relaxed first meeting
Ideally, you should make the initial introductions with your new cat in a large pen, but if this is not possible, have a friend or family member on hand to help.

Your friend should open the door to your new cat's room whilst you are with your existing cat in another room or some distance away.

Watch your cats to see how they interact and if all is calm, reward them with a tasty treat.

As time goes on, each cat will begin to adjust to the other. Any forcing or rushing on your part will only make the situation more stressful and the settling in process will be prolonged. Some cats become best friends and others will merely learn to tolerate each other.

If you feel that your cats are not getting on, get in touch with your veterinarian or local animal shelter for more advice.



4 NOT HAVING IDENTIFICATION

You will no doubt have seen missing cat posters on lamp posts in your neighbourhood. As a responsible and loving cat parent, there is no greater panic than your cat going missing. If your cat lacks a tag and collar or microchip to identify them, they can get lost or get injured - and you will never know what happened to them. You may think that identification isn't necessary for a strictly indoor cat, but since cats are great escape artists it's always important to microchip them. Microchips are the size of a grain of rice and are inserted under the skin on the back of the neck. Your details are kept on file with the microchip company and if your cat goes missing, any veterinary practice or animal shelter will scan the chip and reunite you both. You must remember to update your details if you move home or change your phone number.

5 NOT BEING PREPARED

One of the biggest mistakes new cat parents make is not covering the basics. You should ensure that you have everything your cat needs to be comfortable and happy in your home - a cosy bed, a blanket, toys, a litter box in a quiet space, good quality cat litter, food and water bowls, a scratching post and at least one cat tree/tower which allows them to perch up high while looking out a window.

Coming into a new home is stressful for any cat so you must be prepared to give them your full time and attention, ideally for at least the first couple of days, to get them fully settled and used to their new forever home.



6 NOT CONSIDERING HEALTH COSTS

Many new cat parents fail to consider veterinary costs and care, and that cats need to have regular check-ups to stay healthy. Cats require regular examinations (at least once a year for a healthy cat), vaccination, and immediate veterinary care if you notice that they're sick or injured. You should not adopt a cat if you are unable to afford the correct care.

Regular check-ups allow your veterinarian to notice kidney disease, thyroid disease, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, or other conditions that easily go unnoticed by you in the early stages.

The early symptoms of disease are often subtle and difficult to notice, you're your veterinarian is trained to look for such signs. Early intervention of any disease or health condition that your cat may develop

Can lead to a more successful treatment outcome. In some cases, this may even prolong your cat's life.

Even seemingly healthy cats should get a check-up at least once a year, so don't let your cat's fear of carrier keep you from keeping up with its health. Conditioning your cat to his carrier before the trip to the veterinarian can help.

A few tips on getting your cat used to its carrier for a trip to the veterinarian

If you have already tried to put your cat into a carrier and they've been scared or nervous while doing it, they will sometimes release stress hormones. Cleaning the carrier with a biological solution first, before rinsing and letting it air dry will remove these so that you can start the training process on the right paw.



Step one: Set up the carrier with the lid off in your cat's favourite room where they like to relax

Step two: If your cat is extremely anxious you can spray its carrier with a pheromone spray, like Feliway

Step three: Put a familiar blanket that smells of them into the base, this comforts as well as stops them from sliding

Step four: Pop some treats in the carrier every day until your cat is happy to go into the carrier by themselves

Step five: Place the top of the carrier on, making sure your cat is not in the bottom half when you do so, and repeat the above steps. Leave the door open at all times.

Step six: Once your cat is happy being in the carrier with the top on, you can

begin shutting the door for a few seconds at a time, rewarding your cat

for calm behaviour. Increase this time daily until your cat can be in the carrier with the door closed for a few minutes.

Step seven: Begin lifting the carrier and moving around the room in short bursts. Take your time and watch your cat carefully for any signs of stress.

For those carriers that can't be taken apart, follow the same steps as above. Make sure the door is open at all times and can't accidentally close on them until they're comfortable being in the carrier without you prompting them in.

If you know a trip to the veterinarian is coming up, start this training at least a few days beforehand so that your cat has a chance to get used to the carrier. The more time you give them to get used to the carrier, the better 7



7 **BUYING CHEAP, LOW QUALITY FOOD**

Bargain basement type cat food is not good for your cat as they are full of things called “fillers”. Fillers are there to boost the protein content but contain almost no nutritional value. You should stay away from foods that for example contain “chicken by-product” or a high percentage of grain.

These kinds of foods provide minimal nutrients and calories and are not good for your cat. There are also many instances where cats have got sick from cheap cat foods as they can include chemicals that artificially boost the protein ratings.

Cheap food should not be confused with good quality food you get at a discount or on sale. If you want to keep your cat healthy for many years to come, you should try to avoid bargain basement food where at all possible. *

Supermarkets are getting better in the range of cat food they stock. It is always best to pay a little bit more for good quality food to keep them in good health for as long as possible. Speak to your veterinarian if you have any questions about this.

8 **NEGLECTING THE LITTER BOX**

You must show your cat where the litter box is located in their new home and should not assume it will be able to find it in an unfamiliar environment. If you don't do this, you should not be angry if your cat relieves themselves in an inappropriate place in your house. The litter box should be placed in a quiet (as quiet as possible) area of your home.

* We would always advocate for both people and their cats to eat the best quality food they can afford to maintain good health over the long term.



Cats are very clean animals and won't go to the bathroom if their litter box is dirty and stinking. If you don't clean the litter box daily do not be surprised if your cat starts relieving themselves in other areas in your house. Buying a good quality clumping cat litter will make cleaning the litter box daily really quick and easy.

If your cat still doesn't use the litter box despite it being cleaned daily, they could be suffering from medical or behavioural issues and you should make a veterinary appointment.

9 **FAILURE TO GROOM YOUR CAT**

Brushing your cat regularly will help reduce the amount of fur your cat sheds around your house and is also vital to prevent long-haired cats' fur from becoming matted and having to be cut out.

Your cat's oral health should not be overlooked either as the majority of cats over 3 years of age already have evidence of some degree of dental disease. Brushing your cat's teeth is the gold standard for in-home oral health care but if brushing is impossible, speak about the options with your veterinarian. Apart from possible pain and gum disease, poor dental hygiene can lead to other health conditions in the future.



10 FAILURE TO SPAY/NEUTER

As a cat parent, it is your responsibility to ensure that your pet is spayed or neutered and do your part to help address the cat overpopulation issue.

Some new cat parents think that by only having one cat there is no need for spaying/neutering - but forget about other cats in the neighbourhood. This is a big mistake because cats are great escape artists and you will not be able to watch their every move. Even if you have an indoor-only cat who doesn't accidentally get out, male cats will spray regularly and tend to be more aggressive, while female cats will consistently howl and meow when in heat. It is irresponsible not to spay/neuter your cat when animal shelters are full of cats already needing forever homes.

11 ALLOWING YOUR CAT TO ROAM

If you let your cat run around freely outside you will find that this is taking quite a gamble with their longevity and health. Allowing your cat to go out freely is exposing them to viruses and other pathogens that are likely to cause serious diseases. Your cat can also be poisoned or become prey for wild animals and dogs or get run over by a car. Your cat can also fight with other cats outside and given that they would be new, could run off in a panic and get lost. If you do let your cat out, you should always get them in at night so that your cat will be safer and you'll have more peace of mind.



12 ALLOWING YOUR CAT TO GET FAT

Obese and overweight kitties have become common these days. Overfeeding your cat in the name of love is not love and should not be confused as such. According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP), 28% of cats in the U.S. are obese, and 58% are overweight. Being overweight reduces the life expectancy of your cats and also causes stress on tendons, joints, and ligaments which in turn cause arthritis. Fat lurks in the abdomen and chest, and can prevent the ability of their lungs to expand which could eventually make breathing difficult. Obesity and obese cats are more prone to diabetes, high blood pressure, fatty liver disease which if undetected can lead to liver failure and premature death.

Good quality brands of cat food have a feeding guide on the back of their packaging to help with portion control but speak to your veterinarian if you are unsure about how much to feed your cat.

13 USING HARSH DISCIPLINE

You should not make the mistake of using harsh discipline with the intention of training them to do what you want. Cats are sensitive to rough handling and raised voices. Harsh discipline will only make your cat keep away from you, and that's not what you want as you won't be able to enjoy their warmth and companionship. You can try 'clicker training' and also remember that Jackson Galaxy has lots YouTube videos if needed.



14 IGNORING THE CLAWS

Cats naturally have very sharp claws which pose threats to your skin and your furniture. Most importantly, long claws are painful to the cats, and you wouldn't like it to see your cat in discomfort. You must ensure that their claws are trimmed regularly to prevent them from suffering.

An important point about declawing. Declawing is the amputation of the last phalanx of the toes and causes pain and lifelong discomfort – it would be like cutting off your finger at the last joint. It is inhumane and unnecessary and even banned in many countries. Any loving and caring cat parent would not want to inflict this kind of pain on their cat. Keeping your cat's claws trimmed will prevent them from clawing your furniture, but speak to your veterinarian if you have any further questions about this.

Watch this short 2min video clip on how to trim your cats claw yourself. It will require some patience and practise but soon becomes an easy part of your caring routine.
<https://youtu.be/XQvmRjTHibw>

15 FAILURE TO CONTROL PARASITES

Parasites like fleas are common, but others such as heartworms, hookworms, ticks, roundworms, and mites are not well understood and as a new cat parent, you may not know they have them and how dangerous they can be. Treatment options for heartworm in cats are limited and prevention is better than cure. Talk to your veterinarian about preventive care which should be based on your cat's habits and whether they're an indoor or outdoor cat.



16 **STARING AT YOUR NEW CAT**

Bringing your new cat home is a very happy and exciting time. You'll probably want to play with them every chance you get, but in the early days, while they are still new, they might hide under a bed or around a corner. However, staring at your cat directly in the eyes for long periods of time is never a good idea. To you, staring could be part of the game, but to your cat, it is a sign of issuing a challenge over territory for a fight. Looking directly at your cat is intimidating and makes your cat nervous. Make them comfortable by watching from the corner of your eye instead.

17 **DECIDING AGAINST PET INSURANCE**

Many new cat parents have asked themselves whether pet insurance is worth the cost but come to regret not having it later on. Your cat can accidentally fall from a balcony, develop an allergy, or ingest something dangerous. As they get older many will develop chronic conditions such as renal problems, that require regular veterinarian check-ups and treatment, which can become expensive. Pet insurance ensures that your cat can have the right treatment based on their health needs and not your finances.



18 NOT ALLOWING YOUR CAT TO BE A CAT

While perhaps an obvious statement to make, your cat is not a child or a dog, - they're unique furry creatures with unique characteristics and needs. You should understand that what they do is in their nature and not misinterpret their behaviour as being disruptive or disobedient. For example, cats seek out high places from where to keep an eye on their surroundings, places to sharpen their claws (which might be your couch if you don't provide them with an appropriate scratching pole) and love being a bit noisy in the middle of the night. When you decide to bring a cat into your home, you must accommodate their needs. Once you understand this and all it entails, you'll have a wonderful relationship with your new cat.

19 BRUSHING OFF HEALTH ISSUES

Chronic vomiting is one of the most ignored cat health symptoms. You wouldn't ignore someone in your family who regularly threw up so you should not do the same with your cat. Regular vomiting could be a sign of anything from treatable hairballs or food intolerance to heart disease or kidney failure and should be checked out by your veterinarian.



20 GIVING YOUR CAT MILK

There's a common misconception about cats and milk. Some people think cats love milk and that giving it to them won't do any harm. Some cats might like milk but it definitely isn't good for them at all.

As soon as a cat is weaned from its mother its digestive system stops producing the enzyme lactase which breaks down the lactose content of milk. This means cats become lactose intolerant as they can't digest it properly.

When a cat drinks milk, it ferments in their stomach, causing stomach cramps, diarrhoea, and vomiting. So be kind and don't give your cat milk no matter how much they plead with you.

Conclusion

We hope you have found our guide useful and while we know it is not an exhaustive list, we think it gives a good overview.

If you have any queries about welcoming a cat into your home, you can always speak to your local animal shelter or veterinary practice. They will only be too glad to provide you with the necessary information to be an amazing cat parent!

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