

# New Cat Owner Checklist

By Kurt Schmitt

## Introduction

Many new kitty parents are sometimes unsure of what their needs are, so here's a new cat owner checklist with a list of "must-haves" to get you started.

This list is by no means complete, and there are many cases where there are individual needs, but these are some of the most important considerations. I've also included reminders for some of what I consider to be the most overlooked factors, such as emergency planning.

I may make improvements to this ebook from time to time. To ensure that you have the latest version of this document, download the most recent version here...

<http://cat-lovers-only.com/ncopdf>

**Note:** This is a free ebook. Please pass this ebook on to anyone you feel would benefit. Simply send them to the download page listed above.

## Emergency vet numbers

New cat owners never expect an emergency, and I hope you never have to use it, but just in case, keep your vet's day and off-hour numbers close by. Put them in your address book, your speed dial, and your cell phone.

Some veterinarians have refrigerator magnets with their regular office and emergency number on it. If yours does, then great, but if not, find a way to pin the number up to your refrigerator or a board.

Make sure you understand your vet's emergency procedures for off hours. If your vet is not close by, find out if there's an animal hospital or vet that handles 24 hour emergencies near you. Then record their numbers as well in the same locations.

## Emergency procedures

Not only do you need emergency vet numbers handy, but you also need to plan in advance how you're going to deal with your cat in an emergency.

If you have to leave quickly due to a fire, earthquake, tornado, and so on, your cat needs to be included in your evacuation plans. Many families don't do any disaster

planning at all, let alone involve their pets. Make a plan today and make sure all members of the house are on board.

### **Get a cat carrier**

A cat carrier will allow you to safely bring your cat to other locations (such as the vet, or during an evacuation). Your pet will be able to feel safe in a small enclosed space during these times of stress, and it will be easier to transport her.

Here's something that I foolishly have never done...

It's a good idea to leave the carrier out and make it as inviting as possible. Most cats hate to travel, and it's no wonder... they usually only get in the carrier when it's time to go to the vet.

It's much less stressful for your cat (and you!) if your cat gets used to spending time in the carrier. Cats know when it's "vet day" and it's much worse when you have to bring out the dreaded stress vessel!

Front opening carriers are still the most common, but having been scratched and clawed many times, I don't recommend them. A top opening carrier is the easiest one to get cats in and out of.

That way, you're not tipping the thing up on its end and trying to shake your cat out of it like ketchup from a bottle.

### **The cat litter box**

To prevent litter box problems and keep your cat in top bathroom form, get at least one litter box of the right size, for each cat in the house. And then add one more. Kittens need kitten-sized litter boxes that are easy to get in and out of. Older cats with mobility problems may need a shallow box that is easier to get in and out of as well.

For healthy adult cats, I find that the largest litter box you can get is best. If you get an automatic litter box, you may not have a choice as to the actual size of the box itself. You'll have to try things out and see what happens.

I would not normally recommend automatic litter boxes for first time cat owners. It's much simpler and easier to avoid the mechanical devices and use a plain old litter box with clumping litter.

### **Have an adequate supply of cat toys**

Your cat needs playtime for exercise, stimulation, and to satisfy her hunting behavior. Different cats like different kinds of toys. As a new cat owner, you may

have to buy a number of different toys that get no love from your kitty until you hit pay dirt.

Fishing pole toys like Da Bird are usually big hits. Anything that dangles or can be hidden is usually fun. You can buy cat condos with built in toys as well. If your cat responds to it (about 80 percent do), then catnip or catnip oil can enhance a toy and encourage play.

Plan to give your cat regular exercise sessions, about 10-15 minutes at a time, at least daily.

### **Grooming Tools**

Clean up ahead! Coughing up fur balls is a part of being a cat, and cleaning them up is part of being a cat owner.

Frequent grooming can help. Get yourself some tools, like the Furminator, flea combs, and a slicker brush. You'll also need something to pick up the fur off the furniture, bedding and clothing (such as lint rollers).

With regularly grooming, your cat will likely still have hairballs, but not as much.

### **Set up the right environment**

Set up your house to be "cat friendly." Ideally, you'll set up a "cat sanctuary" area where your cat can spend some time by herself and play in her cat tree.

At the very least, get a scratching board or post, and buy a cat tree/kitty condo and cat beds and perches. Make sure you have a supply of catnip to sprinkle on the right spots.

### **Talk to your vet**

Make sure your cat is in top form with an initial visit to the veterinarian. Kittens need their initial vaccination series (or boosters), worming treatment, and health check up.

If you've just adopted an older cat, they may also need boosters for vaccinations received earlier in life. They also need a baseline physical done, and should be tested for worms and other parasites, communicable diseases, and infections.

Blood and urine tests can reveal problems that may indicate more serious conditions common to older cats, such as hyperthyroidism and diabetes.

Talk to your vet about vaccinations, diet and food, supplements, and get any recommendations on care. Also discuss spay/neuter procedures, and whether or not your cat will be indoor or outdoor.

### **Get the right food**

Decide on what you're going to feed your cat and when. Are you going with homemade meals? Organic cat food? Standard commercial dry or wet food? What's the feeding schedule? You'll want to discuss this with your veterinarian.

### **Use proper behavior modification**

Understanding cat behavior is important in order to deliver proper care. Treating your pets like the family members they are and taking your cat into consideration when making life changing decisions can go a long way to helping your cat remain well behaved.

New cat owners often make the mistake of treating their cats like dogs and have wrong expectations for behavior. Cats are not dogs, and they're not little people either. We like to give our pets human attributes, but a cat needs to be treated like a cat.

Cats like a routine, so let your cat settle into one. Disrupting that routine too much can lead to behavior problems.

"Catch your cat doing things right." Offer praise, affection, playtime and treats when you see your cat exhibiting behaviors that you want to reinforce. This is the best method for behavior modification.

Rubbing your pet's nose in an "accident" on the floor is one of the worst moves you can make. It's not only ineffective, it's destructive to your relationship with your kitty. Also remember never to hit your cat out of anger or as punishment. This will only make your cat fearful, less cooperative, and may lead to behavior problems.

### **Set rules**

You need two sets of rules... one for your cat, and one for your family. And those sets of rules need to mesh.

If your cat isn't allowed on the counter or the top of the sofa, you may likely need a deterrent or some sort of cat repellent.

Repellents are not fool-proof, and your family needs to know how to deal with behaviors that don't comply. Consistency is important, and everyone in the house needs to be on the same page with respect how to treat your cat. Your cat will be

much better adjusted and you'll prevent behavior problems if everyone treats her the same way.

If one family member allows your cat on the counter and rewards her with affection, it's going to be confusing when other family members bark at her for being up there.

## **Isolation**

The adjustment period for a cat brought into a new home can be a few days, or it can take 6 months.

Remember... cats hate change. You have to do what you can to try to ease the transition for your cat.

Start your cat out right by secluding her in a room by herself. Choose a sunny room with a window. Pull up a chair or get a cat perch so that your cat can have a window seat.

Bird feeders outside make a great distraction and entertainment center for your cat, but sometimes just having a window is enough.

Bring in the food and water bowls, and a litter box placed far away from the food and water area. Set up a cat tree and toys, along with a sleeping area. A blanket works fine, but a cat bed does too. She may end up sleeping wherever she wants, but set one up anyway.

The best time to bring a new cat into the house is when you have a few days off so that you can spend lots of time with her and help her adjust. Visit her in her isolation room often and play with her and show her lots of affection.

Your cat may hide under the bed or in a closet for a few days. She may run and hide when someone enters the room. This is not unusual. It sometimes takes a bit of time for a cat to trust someone.

Use toys and food as pleasurable distractions to get her to come out, but don't force it. Cats like to make their own decisions.

## **The commitment**

Beyond the information here, this list of [cat care tips](#) may be helpful. The cost of owning a cat can be over \$10,000 over the lifetime of your pet. Before you adopt a pet of any kind, please understand the commitment required and the financial implications.

## About the author



Kurt Schmitt  
Founder of Cat Lovers Only  
<http://www.cat-lovers-only.com/>

Hi, I'm Kurt Schmitt, and I'm the founder of [cat-lovers-only.com](http://www.cat-lovers-only.com/), a website where people who appreciate cats can share information, pictures, videos and stories.

I love animals and have been fascinated with cats my whole life. But, I grew up with a dog, so I learned to care for cats as an adult.

The more time I spent with my cats, the more I learned to appreciate what amazing creatures they are. But, I had questions... lots of them, and the learning began. It wasn't easy to find the answers, and I turned to books, veterinarians, TV shows, and lots of trial and error.

After a great learning experience as a long time cat owner, I knew there were other cat owners who likely had many of the same questions that I once had. In 2004, I started Cat Lovers Only in order to share what I'd learned.

Several million visitors later, I've learned even more.

## How this ebook came about

I've had a "new cat owner checklist" posted on my site for quite some time. Thousands of visitors have seen it, but I've always felt that I could reach more people if it were in a more portable format.

When dog blogger and photographer Allen Pearson asked me for some information on cats to share with his audience, it seemed like the perfect time to turn my checklist into a shareable ebook, and here it is.

Meet Allen...

## About Allen Pearson



Allen Pearson  
Dog, Cat and Garden Photographer and Blogger  
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I love dogs, I grew up with them, and seem to have a camaraderie with them. Though, before marriage, I hadn't had much experience with cats, I have been loved by 3 cats in my life.

A phone call from PetConnect Rescue of Potomac, Maryland, in August 2011 got me into photographing dogs and cats for rescue groups to assist in getting the animals "Forever Homes." I fell in love with this work from the start. I love meeting the dogs, getting to know them and portraying their unique beauty in photography. My cat work is usually more posed since the animal usually isn't in a situation to be themselves.

Further, I am working to photograph for clients with the goal of creating fun images for them to enjoy of their companions. "Project Smiles for Dogs and Cats" is a recent project for people whose pet has received a terminal diagnosis.

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