

KITTEN OR ADULT: WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

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General Practice & Preventative Medicine

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE?

You have decided to open your heart and your home to a cat. But should you adopt a fresh, untrained kitten or go for a stately, older cat? Both have distinct advantages and disadvantages. The final decision should be based on your family's desires, lifestyles and needs.

ADVANTAGES OF AN ADULT

There is usually very little guesswork with an adult cat. He is as large as he is going to grow, and you don't have to guess whether he is a shorthair or longhair.

In addition, he usually comes litter-box trained and has outgrown the impulse to chew on everything. Although he may still like to play, he won't be running in a high gear all the time. An older cat – especially one who has already shared a household or played with other pets – is more likely to meld into the existing hierarchy established by your other dogs and cats. If he is healthy, an adult cat should not need as many trips to the veterinarian as a kitten.

ADVANTAGES OF A KITTEN

But a kitten is a clean slate. His habits haven't been set, and you get to teach him and watch him grow. They are also undeniably adorable and entertaining – a little ball of love that's always on the go.

Adopting a kitten also gives you the advantage of developing a strong, priceless bond. Because he is so young, he has the potential to be part of your family longer.

DISADVANTAGES OF AN ADULT

There could be a reason why the adult cat was put up for adoption in the first place. He may suffer from serious behavioral problems, and he might prove to be a difficult pet.

Furthermore, you are unsure of the cat's previous environment. The fact that they yelled at him, kept him confined in a small room or did not give the cat his needed space and privacy might be the reason he ended up in the shelter. Or, the previous owner didn't really want a longhaired cat and would not brush him, resulting in a matted and crabby kitty. Depending on his personality and experiences, an adult cat may take longer to bond with you.

DISADVANTAGES OF A KITTEN

Even with the best guess, you are not really sure of the kitten's final haircoat length. This can cause



problems if your kitten ends up with long hair, and you don't have the time to brush him daily.

In addition, kittens are famous for their non-stop energy and desire to play – especially at night. Without another kitten to play with, you become the target. They have sharp teeth and claws, and they can play pretty rough. Kittens also can be destructive to your couch, plants, carpet and whatever else you may treasure.

After learning about the positive and negative aspects of kittens and adult cats, step back and take a look at your life. Do you have the time and patience it takes to raise a kitten? If so, you will have a loving pet that can fit perfectly into your family. If you are willing to adopt an older cat, even with minor flaws, you will have a greatly, devoted companion.

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