

Before you Adopt – Children and Cats



Important Information For Parents

Living with a cat can be beneficial to children. Cats can enhance children's self-esteem, teach them responsibility and help them to learn empathy. However, children and cats may not always automatically have a wonderful relationship. Parents must be willing to teach the cat and the child acceptable limits of behavior in order to make their interactions pleasant and safe. Management and proper socialization is the foundation for a safe and fun environment for children and cats.

Selecting a Cat

What age of cat is best?

As a general rule, if your child is under five years old, it's best to adopt a cat that's over two years old. Many people have a warm and fuzzy image of a kitten and a child growing up together, but there are a few things you need to consider before adopting a kitten (less than 1 year old) if you have a young child. For the reasons below, it is Homeward Pet's policy to adopt kittens to families with children at least 5 years of age or older.

- **Time and energy:** Kittens require a lot of time, patience and supervision. If you have a young child who already requires a lot of care and time, you should ask yourself if you will have enough time to care for a kitten as well.
- **Safety:** Kittens, because they're babies, are fragile creatures. A kitten may become frightened or even injured by a well-meaning, curious child who wants to constantly pick him up, hug him or explore his body by pulling on his tail or ears.
- **Rough play:** Kittens have sharp teeth and claws with which they may inadvertently injure a small child. Kittens also tend to climb up on small children and accidentally scratch. All interactions between your child and kitten will need to be closely supervised in order to minimize the chances of either being injured.
- **Advantages of getting an adult cat:** Adult cats require less time and attention once they've adjusted to your family and household routine. You can better gauge how tolerant an adult cat will be of a child's enthusiasm and you can work with your local animal shelter to adopt a cat that has previously lived with children. Although kittens can be a lot of fun and it's exciting and rewarding to help them grow into wonderful companions, they do require significantly more time to supervise than an adult cat.

Who Will Care For The Cat?

It's unrealistic to expect a child, regardless of age, to have the sole responsibility of caring for a cat. Cats need basic things, like food, water, shelter and litterbox maintenance, but they also need to be played with and given opportunities to exercise on a consistent basis. Teaching a cat the rules of the house and helping him become a good companion is too overwhelming a task for a young child. While responsible teenagers may be up to the task, they may not be willing to spend an adequate amount of time with the cat, as their desire to be with their friends usually takes over at this age. If you're adopting a cat "for the kids," you must be prepared and willing to be the cat's primary caretaker.

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Thanks to our friends at the
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