

Feline Companions

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses whether it's a good idea to get a second cat.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: I think my cat is lonely. Should I adopt a second cat?

A: That question does not have a simple answer, but let me tell you my experiences. One of my clients had two elderly cats, Tigger and Pete. Though Pete had medical issues, he was always active and in good spirits when Tigger was around. But when Tigger passed away, Pete seemed lonely and depressed. My clients decided to throw caution to the wind and adopt a 7-month-old cutie named Oscar to keep Pete company.

With Oscar in the house Pete soon became more like his old self, even if he wasn't interacting and playing much. Just watching Oscar zoom around was like a floor show for him and better than just sleeping all day. Though they haven't become fast friends, they do sleep on the same bed – at opposite ends for now. I believe this has worked out because both had lived with other cats previously.

If your cat has always been on his own, accepting another cat in his territory might be difficult. You would think that cats like to spend time with each other, but I believe that depends on their personalities. If your cat tends to be aggressive with people, he could be with another cat. If he is calm and friendly, he might enjoy a feline friend.

I suggest spending time with the cat you want to adopt to try to get a read on her personality —friendly and outgoing would be a plus. Also, I have seen easier transitions when adopting a kitten or younger cat. Kittens tend to be more interested in playing than defending territory. If the kitten becomes too much for the resident cat, he will probably aim a good hiss at her which should be enough to say "back off." This happened in my home. I rescued two rambunctious kittens who wanted to play with my older cat's tail. He expressed his displeasure with a hiss and they skedaddled away.

Remember that the resident cat's nose will be out of joint for awhile, but with time and commitment, you can hope for a happy home for all. Please search the site archives for my suggestions on how to introduce a new cat into the home, and I encourage you to share your stories and comments.