

How Should I Prepare for an Adopted Cat?

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, gives advice on adopting a furry family member.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: I am adopting my first cat. How should I prepare?

A: Good for you! I think you will find that sharing your home with a feline friend is a wonderful experience and I am very glad you are adopting — there are plenty of kitties in shelters that need good homes. The good news about adopting from shelters is that you can be assured your cat will have been examined and treated by a vet. This includes looking for fleas, worms, ear mites, spaying and neutering if old enough, and testing for feline leukemia and other diseases.

One of my clients adopted two sweet kittens, Lance and Lexi, who they fell in love with immediately. However, they adopted from a private home and it was only after their first visit to the vet that it was discovered both had feline leukemia. This weakens the immune system and makes cats vulnerable to all kinds of illnesses. My clients could not bear to give up Lance and Lexi so they have followed the regimen of care required. One has since passed away, but the other is still here, happy, active and deeply loved. This shows that some cats can live many years with this disease if properly cared for. If you adopt from a private home or rescue group, take your new cat to the vet within a few days

Meanwhile, a little preparation before bringing your new cat home will benefit both of you. First of all, know she will need time to adjust. Have a room ready for her with a full litterbox, water and food bowls, treats and a scratching post to encourage good habits (and furniture protection). Once she is placed in her room, don't force her out. She may hide at first, which is normal, but she will come out to explore when ready.

I am a great believer in talking to my cats. A calm voice can be very reassuring. Play with her and pet her as much as she will allow but don't be too forceful. When she feels comfortable, you will have a friend for life. As always I welcome your comments and stories.