



**POSITIVE
CAT-TITUDE**
Studies show that
owning a cat helps
ease anxiety and
alleviate loneliness.

THE PERFECT FELINE FRIEND

Looking to adopt a cat that fits your lifestyle? Our experts—and the latest science—suggest you start by asking these five key questions. **BY BRITTANY VANDERBILL**



1



HOW MUCH PLAYTIME AM I UP FOR?

Cats change as they age, and some (especially Bengals) need more playtime than others. “As a rule, the more elderly, the less active,” says Mary Molloy, a behavior consultant with Behavior Vets of NYC. “If someone is interested in adopting a low-energy cat, I will always recommend a senior (7+)!” adds Laura Cassidy, certified cat trainer with Pawsitive Vibes Cat Behavior & Training in Baltimore. “Senior cats are some of the most overlooked and deserving animals in shelters and rescues.”

2



DO I WANT A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY OR AN INTROVERT?

Some cats love company, others not so much. If you adopt from a shelter, Molloy recommends paying attention to whether kitty meows for snuggles, walks toward you cautiously, tries to hide, or hisses when approached. She notes that cats can develop trust with their owners, but it’s unusual for very skittish kitties to become truly comfortable around others. “If you want a cat who will nuzzle up to your friends right off the bat, you want to look for a less fearful cat,” advises Molloy.

3



IS MY OTHER CAT READY FOR A BUDDY?

Introducing a new cat to the current ruler of the roost is tricky, especially since an established pet’s reactions are “never a sure thing,” cautions Molloy. One way to improve your odds of a good first impression: “Adopt a cat who’s a similar age and energy level to your current cat,” recommends Cassidy. She adds that a slower introduction (with plenty of treats!) is best, keeping the cats separated and acquainting them through a baby gate that can later be removed.

4



AM I READY TO BE A COMMITTED CAT OWNER—EVEN IF ISSUES ARISE?

Hate surprises? Then it’s a good idea to do some research on common cat issues and how to resolve them—like litter box avoidance and overgrooming—before adopting. Breed types and a number of other reasons, like stress and allergies, can contribute to overgrooming. And Cassidy notes that human errors, like infrequent cleaning or inaccessibility, are the cause of many litter box issues—which can typically be corrected.

5



WHAT WILL I DO IF MY “PERFECT” CAT SUDDENLY DEVELOPS A DEFIANT ATTITUDE?

There’s a lot you can do to turn a rude ‘tude into cool cat. Molloy says behavior modification—and, if necessary, medication—can help manage aggression. Generally, behavior modification is a process of identifying kitty’s triggers, then slowly exposing her to the trigger (to cause a very mild reaction) while providing a treat to gently correct the reaction. Work with your vet to determine the right mix of help to make your kitty a purrfect fit for your home.