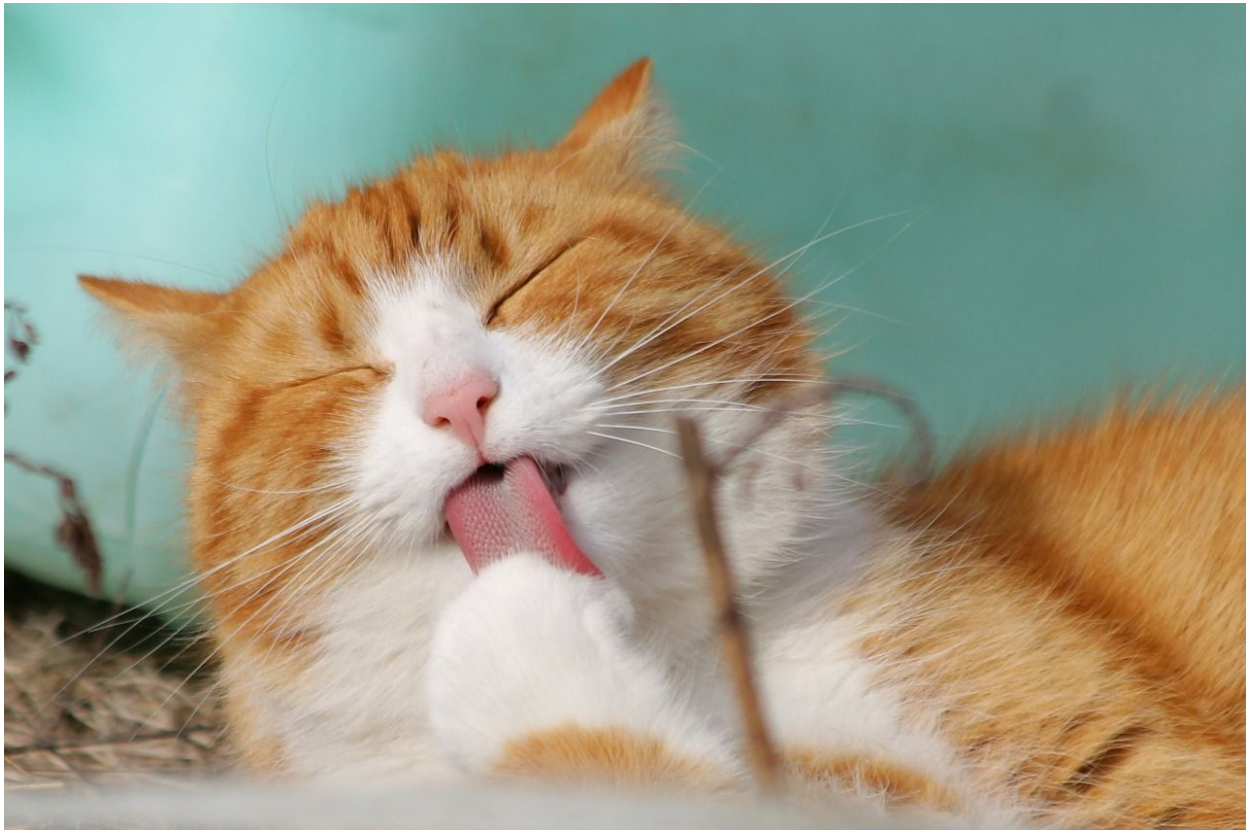


Four Essential Things Every First-Time Cat Owner Must Know



For a first-time pet owner, a cat may seem like a safer bet than a dog. Dogs typically require more hands on care, more exercise, and generally more attention. Cats are easygoing and great for someone who has never had to take care of an animal before. While this is generally true, this doesn't mean that you can just grab a cat and go about your life together without knowing some essentials. Cats, like dogs, have requirements for health and happiness. Here's what you need to know.

Not all cats are the same

Everyone knows a lot about dog breeds - which are better with kids, which are better for allergies, which are more energetic, etc. But people don't always focus on the difference between cat breeds. The fact is cats vary quite a bit and you can find yourself stuck with one that doesn't match your desire for affection, compatibility with other pets, and shedding/grooming level. Before you adopt a new cat you should do some research on specific cat breeds and make sure you pick one that is compatible with your lifestyle. Check out [this resource](#) for tons of information about all kinds of cat breed and try [this breed selector](#).

What does your cat need

Do you know everything that your new cat will need as soon as you bring them home? Probably not. For instance, did you know that there are actually certain types of materials you should avoid when choosing food and water bowls (it's plastic, for example, which can be offputting and carry more feline acne-causing bacteria according to LoveThatPet.com).

A non-exhaustive list of what you need for your new cat includes: food and water bowls, collar and name tags, a scratching post (do NOT forget this if you like your furniture), a cat bed, plenty of toys, and a litterbox. With these basics, you'll be ready when Mr. Whiskers steps his first paw through your door.

You shouldn't leave you cat alone for long periods of time

Somewhere, somehow, it became part of the conventional wisdom that cats are so self-sufficient that you can simply leave some food and water out and leave them to their own devices for long periods of time. While cats are certainly more independent, this is simply not true. If you must be away from home for work or vacation (especially early on in the cat's life), you should think about how your cat will stay [cared-for](#) in your absence. Hiring a cat sitter is probably the best option, as this provides [many benefits](#) to both you and your cat.

Your cat is going to be a cat - don't fight it

You may have heard it before, but it's important to emphasize that a cat is not a dog. A cat is not a child. A cat is a cat, and thus is going to do cat things. Cats oftentimes want their privacy and personal space. You cannot force a cat to hang out with you. You can't put a cat's litterbox in the middle of the room and expect them to be comfortable with it. Your cat will scratch things - not because they are a jerk, but because this is what [they naturally do](#). Your cat is a predator and will attack your toes. They will also attack a mouse or a bird if you let them outside. The best way to bond with your new cat is to accept everything that makes them peculiar, which in turn, is everything that makes them wonderful.

There is a lot of misinformation out there about cats, specifically a lot of "conventional wisdom" that says cats are so independent as to be completely hands-off. In fact, cats need care, attention, and some specific living arrangements to thrive. As with any major life decision, the responsibility that comes with owning a cat for the first time is to do your research and make sure your situation is as ideal as possible.

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