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About the Author

Eileen Mayer wants to help you prepare for and enjoy your new cat or kitten.

Eileen said, "Sharing your [home](#) with a cat is a wonderful adventure. I want to make every part of it as easy and enjoyable as I can."

"We had a cat when I was very young. They said it helped me learn about caring for pets as well as having lots of [fun](#) playing with it!"

Eileen said, "I've had other pets but living with a cat is a bit different because they have qualities others don't!"

"My book will show you how to prepare for your new pet because owning a cat is a commitment in time and [money](#), but you will get rewarded every day for years to come."

"I share tips that I learned from my experience and [research](#) as well as important information from other cat owners and experts so every cat owner gets what they need to know."

"I have tips which will help you make your cat happy and keep it a happy, active member of your family for years, whatever type of home you have.

Eileen said, "Cats have definitely made my [life](#) much richer and this book is my way of helping you make your cats lives richer too!"

Introduction

I am happy that you are starting your journey as a new cat owner.

Cats are wonderful pets and they each have some unique qualities.

I believe that every reader will find tips that [help](#) them with whatever type of cat they decide to get.

I'll start with some information about what type of cat might best fit your circumstances and whether getting one or two cats might suit you more. And there are more options to think about too!

I focus mostly on choosing, enjoying and caring for kittens but give some information about getting an older cat if some readers decide to do that after considering their situation and the kitten's needs.

Then, you'll find tips about preparing yourself, your family and your home for the best introduction to your cat. Care and time will be needed to make that first contact as great as it can be.

I'll share suggestions to make each [step](#) a bit easier.

You can avoid some risks and reduce some costs but there are also some which are very important that you may not be aware of.

I'll put the light on some myths and mistakes which hurt cats and their owners, and explain some of the cat's body [language](#) which helps to improve our relationships with them.

Although cats have been our honored guests since Ancient Egypt was thriving, scientists are still finding out what cats are really capable of. Researchers are turning around some "facts" which most of us used and I'll help you give your feline friend the very best of care and companionship!

Eileen Mayer

Which Sort of Cat for You?

It's very easy to get a cat. I explain the important points about the great number of sources (local or [online](#)) in the next chapter.

This part will help you decide what sort of cat might be best suited for you and your family.

Kitten

Many people only think about getting a kitten which they can enjoy and interact with through its life.

Kittens are cute and you will have full control, but they are not always the best choice.

Very young [children](#) can cause injury to your kitten because they aren't in full control of their movements and they don't realize the damage they can do to their new "toy".

All the members of your family will have more work to do to accommodate the needs of a kitten than an older cat.

But, there are different, equally important obligations which come with getting an older cat which I'll explain in that section.

All kittens need to stay with their mother for at least six to (preferably) ten weeks to be taught basic [behaviors](#) and get a full course of cat milk.



If they have lost the mother, they need a foster cat which can provide milk or a supply of a cat-milk substitute from your veterinarian or other source (the vet's [solution](#) is preferred).

Most cats cannot tolerate cow's milk. But all kittens must only have cat milk!

The feeding and other requirements for your kitten are much more involved than with an older cat.

If you get a kitten, you will be providing timed feeds through each day and

night and other care to give it the right start.

Two Kittens



If you have the [room](#) and the budget, you might consider getting two kittens at once.

Any combination would work out but the most popular combination seems to be a male and a female.

My recommendation would be to consider the sort of personality traits you want and ask the owner to suggest two or just look for two that seem to be getting along together and have no problems.

Make sure you get them desexed when your vet advises to do so.

Generally, two males

Male or Female?

Any male or [female](#) kitten could be a good choice for most people.

But every cat has their own character and previous experiences which may affect them in ways which can be hard to know when you have to make the selection.

Generally, neutered males are calmer than many neutered females.

Health and attitude (or personality) can be important factors with kittens because so much [development](#) will happen after you get your new pet home.

Older Cat

Although most of this book is focused on getting a kitten, many people are adopting an older cat from a shelter because they want to give it a second chance. SO, I'll include some information and tips about that option which may interest some readers.

Older cats become homeless through various circumstances.

Many owners find they cannot afford the costs of care and feeding of the cat companion when their circumstances change due to health, [employment](#) or age.

Some of these cats are passed on to relatives, some are euthanized, others just abandoned and many find themselves in [animal](#) shelters.

If you decide to look after a second-hand cat, you deserve a pat on your back!

But, you need to be aware that you are taking on a cat with invisible [baggage](#).

Your new friend has been affected by the experiences it has had up till now, including the loss of its previous home.

Many cats are successfully re-homed but please watch for behaviors which are unusual and sometimes unwelcome so you can [deal](#) with them.

Be patient is the first rule for cat owners. It's particularly important with cats that had bad experiences. Losing their first home is one of the worst.

Cats respond to people according to how they are treated and even cats that have bad experiences can show affection and learn new rules when they are given a chance.

Choosing Your Vet



The vet you select to look after your kitten is a very important part of the team.

Take your time and check at least a couple of local services.

Get recommendations from other cat owners you know. Ask them about any bad experiences they may have had

too. Don't be too concerned about hearsay negative comments.

You can ask local pet [shops](#) about who they use or get good feedback about.

Don't wait until you buy your cat to start looking for a vet.

You need time to do your own check of each vet's premises and staff to see if they 'feel' right to you.

You should make and pay for an appointment with one or two vets so you can [talk](#) to them or a staff member about their services and costs.

Ask about their experience with cats.

Do they have a feline specialist on staff or a [specialist](#) they refer to when necessary?

Some vets have special qualifications in feline medicine. They may work in a practice which specializes in felines or as a specialist in a general veterinary [practice](#).

If there is a cat club in your area, you might attend a meeting and talk to some members if you don't know many people that have cats.

Your cat needs regular check-ups to find problems before they become too big.

An annual visit for vaccinations and check-ups every six months will usually be enough to keep your pet in a low-risk category.

Some vaccinations will only be required every two or more years so costs will not be the same all the time.

The main reason for the six monthly checks is because of the cat's rate of aging compared to us.

You know that most of us gradually wear out and need regular checks to help our [doctor](#) help us keep ticking over.

Our cats also will benefit from their 6 month checks where small problems can be dealt with and their [system](#) retuned so they can be with us for longer.

Where to Get Your Kitten(s)

There are many options for getting a cat. I'll give you [tips](#) about the most common choices and why some are a lot better than others.

You have the final say and it's as important for you as it is for your new cat. A wise choice will make a big difference to ensure a long and happy partnership for you both!

A cat is a 15 year commitment.

Advertisements (local or online)

You should get your new cat from a source where you can personally check the cat out and also check the supplier's reputation with previous customers.

Are the premises unclean? Are the cats healthy?

Breeders

Only [deal](#) with professional breeders who care for their cats.

Their cats will be true to description.

If you want to get a registered cat from a specialist breeder far away, it would be advisable to [travel](#) there before closing the deal. Many breeders may insist on it.

"Free" Kittens

If someone, maybe a neighbor, offers you a kitten from their accidental litter, it may seem mean to refuse. But, that little bundle of fur may not have been fully weaned or cared for.

Taking it in might bring problems like diseases which could affect your other pets and family.

If you are sure the kitten is healthy, you should think about it just like any other cat you were thinking of getting.

If you are willing to take that on, you need to consider what you want, not just what will relieve someone else's problem.

Pet shops

Some pet shops are well run, look after the animals they offer and only get them from reputable and caring breeders.

Others are just in it for the buck! Those should be avoided.

Shelters

There are many shelters of all kinds trying to help as many abandoned animals as they can. But, the legacy of thoughtless owners that don't have their pets de-sexed and take little responsibility for the flood of babies produced, make it impossible.

The quality of [care](#) and accountability varies widely. Some of the best are very small and some of the biggest slip up at times.

When you get a kitten or other animal from a shelter, you are giving it a new beginning. The fee you pay will also help more animals still waiting inside.

Most shelters medically [check](#), de-sex and microchip the animals before offering them for adoption.

Do some checking before you donate to any shelter but please donate what you can when you find one that is worthwhile.

As well as [cash](#), shelters can use volunteers to help with the maintenance of equipment and care of the animals.

Preparing Your Home

Before you get your kitten, do a safety inspection

Involve your whole family in this from the [start](#).

Each person must put away anything which could be damaged by the kitten and also be aware of those items they use which could harm the cat.

Your new cat should be kept out of your kitchen and laundry because of the dangerous substances and equipment in those areas.

Bathrooms also have many sharp implements, sprays and liquids which could hurt the new cat.

Many plants are also a risk to them.

I have put the addresses of the ASPCA lists of dangerous plants and household products in the Resources section at the back of this [book](#).

These lists are good but never can be complete. Check any plants not on the lists with your Vet or experienced cat owner.

A very dangerous group of plants I am aware of are lilies!

Any part of any kind of lily is extremely toxic to cats.

Anything containing caffeine is also dangerous for cats (and dogs) of any age. That includes [tea](#), coffee, chocolate and "energy drinks. A substance in their caffeine content is a poison which can accumulate in cats and dogs almost un-noticed.

Check those rooms which your new cat will be allowed in for drapes, soft coverings etc which could catch your cat's claws and cause [injury](#).

Make sure that you protect by covering or removing any valuable or precious items which the cat might damage.

Preparing Your Family

Your cat will be part of your family for up to 15 years.

Have a discussion with all family members before you actually get the cat.

They may have questions and concerns which you need to resolve to make their introduction to your new pet smooth.

There will be some disruption to their normal routines during the first critical week after the cat arrives.

Your new kitten needs the cooperation and understanding of every member of your [family](#).

If anyone has serious allergies, they should be tested and approval gained from their doctor before you get your cat.

If possible, arrange for the kitten to have a room to itself for at least a week when it arrives.

All other pets should be kept out until you decide that they can be safely introduced to the kitten after it has settled a bit.

Talk with each family [member](#) about the kitten and discuss any concerns or questions they have.

Get their cooperation and show your appreciation for it.

Selecting Your Kitten

All those on offer should be bright, clean and with no obvious problems.

They should be interested in their surroundings.

If they scratch themselves, they may have mites or [skin](#) infections.

If a kitten sits with [head](#) bowed, it could be sleepy or sick.

Some people select a kitten that looks sad, thinking they can cheer it up when they get it home, but that one is more likely to have problems either medical or with its socializing.

There should be no bald spots in the fur and no deposit in or around the nose or eyes. Look at the [ears](#). Most cats will keep them up and they also should be clean.

Wheezing, coughing or sneezing could indicate low level of [fitness](#) and high susceptibility to colds and related problems.

Be careful when you lift them. Always ask permission first.

If the owner tells you to hold it a certain way, do that. If you think the cat might not be properly supported, ask if you can adjust your hold before lifting it.

Many kittens are injured or, at least frightened by being handled awkwardly.

If the owner doesn't give you specific instructions, this [method](#) should be okay.

Hold one hand underneath their bottom so that their [weight](#) is supported. Put your other arm under the cat's front legs.

Do not squeeze, poke or stretch any part of them.

Any sign of problems with their fur, [eyes](#), ears or movement should be a warning.

Look for a kitten which is interested in you or what you are doing.

That confidence will make your attempts to connect with it and [train](#) it a little easier.

How does it react to your touch? A purr should confirm that the kitten has had enough of the right sort of human contact to be comfortable around our family.

Tell the owner or shelter worker if you have a preference for either a placid cat or one with lots of [energy](#). They will have enough experience around the available cats to help you to make a great match!

Bringing Your Kitten Home



You have set up your home for its new resident and made it as welcoming and safe as possible.

Now, you go to get the gear you need to bring your pet home.

Carrier

This should be carefully considered because the safety of your pet will depend on it at times.

Buy one that is roomy enough to still hold your cat when it has grown full size. This will give the cat a sort of second home for [life](#).

Buying a new carrier every couple of years is poor economics and will cause the cat some stress when you change over to each new carrier.

The carrier should be used for all car trips. If someone carries the kitten or grown cat on their [lap](#) and there is a sudden stop or swerve, the poor feline could be propelled into someone or part of the [car](#)!

Cat bed

Cat beds are available in a wide variety.

A kitten can be put in a carton with a comfortable blanket and maybe a ticking clock underneath it.

Litter Boxes



Litter boxes for kittens should have one side very low so that they can get in and out of it easily. The other sides can be a lot higher which will make the cat less nervous.

To start them using it, watch for indications they are looking for a [spot](#) or wait till they've eaten something, then gently lift and carry them to the

box. If they weren't taught that way, you will need to watch the kitten and gently move it to the tray after it has some food or [water](#) or seems to be looking for a spot.

You need at least two litter boxes for a single level home and one more for each extra level so the cat doesn't have to go too far to find and use one.

Teach Your Cat to Use its Tray.

It's usually easy to teach a cat to use its litter tray.

Kittens have a natural instinct which encourages them to dig into dirt at about four or five weeks.

To re-inforce the lesson, put the kitten in the [box](#) after any activity which gets it excited and first thing when it wakes up the next [morning](#).

That should be enough for your cat to become a reliable user.

Other Pets



Most [dogs](#) and cats will settle in with a new cat or kitten after a few days.

But, for those few days, you and every other member of your family should keep watch on the kitten and make sure the other animals are not harassing it or being harassed.

Any new cat should be kept away from pet birds and any others which are types that are a cat's natural prey. Don't take chances

Pet Insurance

The costs of keeping a cat keep rising, so it's worthwhile to check out the possibility of Pet Insurance.

Not all Pet Insurance is the same but many of the policies are offered by subsidiaries of the same large [company](#) in some countries.

Policies which are offered through animal welfare organizations, veterinarians and other groups are often from the same companies which pay the organization offering them a [commission](#) or royalty for each one sold.

Like any other insurance, you need to read the documentation to be sure that the policy will fit your needs.

Things which should be checked include:

What regular procedures are covered?

Do you have to pay the bill and then [claim](#) a refund from the Insurer?

When does coverage start? That may be when the company banks your first payment which could be weeks after you paid it.

What procedures are excluded? Sometimes, they will pay the specified amount for a leg operation but may not pay as much or at all for similar operations on the other legs.

What happens about any condition which your pet already has?

Does the policy cover extra services and care if required?

These policies are just as important as your personal insurances. They need to be reviewed just as carefully before you decide which policy to get.

What Cats Should Eat



Cats must have meat.

All cats need meat as a regular part of their [diet](#).

Whether canned or dry packaged cat food is better is a never-ending [discussion](#).

Discuss the choices with your vet and

ask what they recommend.

Ask the person you get your cat from what they fed it and what they feed their adult cats?

Stick with your new cat's previous [diet](#) as far as possible, at least until it is settled in.

Changing their regular menu too quickly may cause diarrhea.

Only make changes to the food in small stages unless there is a problem with the current food.

All cats after they are weaned must have fresh, clean water available at all times.

Some cats have a low tolerance of some [food](#). You will need to consult your vet if this seems to be affecting your cat.

The vet can set up an adequate diet with a limited number of items (an elimination diet). Then, you remove one item at a time in line with your vet's advice so that the item which affects your cat can be isolated without the cat being under-nourished.

Never feed your cat raw meat. Cooked chicken or beef should be fine. Turkey is okay as an occasional variation.

Check that you have removed all bones and other parts.

What else Your Cat Needs

Your cat needs to have a bowl of water always available.

Check it regularly to ensure it is not spilled or fouled.

Use a heavy bowl which cannot be easily tipped.

Don't leave your pet's food out in a bowl. Put it out at set times and remove the bowl a few minutes after your cat stops [eating](#).

This reduces the possibility of the food getting spilled or contaminated.

Cooked grains can be good, not all cats like them. As well as [cooking](#) them, you could try mashing them.

Fresh, peeled cucumber and mashed potatoes are okay but check that you cat has eaten them and not just played around them.

What You Cat Must Not Have

Any of these items can be dangerous even in small amounts over a period. Some will not display symptoms until the problem is already severe!

Don't allow any cat access to [chocolate](#), products with caffeine, grapes, raisins, garlic or nuts, especially macadamias.

Don't give them bread, [alcohol](#), or onion in any form. Also, chives or garlic may upset your cat's digestion and have other effects if they get more at a later time.

Avocados are also deadly because of a substance which is found in the seed and the fruit as well.

Clicker Training your young Cat

Cat's can be trained but they need some incentive unlike most dogs.

Using sound reinforcement (clicker training) helps increase the cat's focus on what you want it to do.

You can buy a clicker or use anything which is small enough to fit in one hand and makes a suitable [sound](#).

Start by deciding which reward you will use. It might be something to eat or a short play session.

Now, decide what you will train your kitten to do first. Getting it to come to you or sit down or raise one paw would all be doable.

Keep it simple and in line with a cat's normal behavior.

Also, keep the [training](#) sessions very short, no more than a couple of minutes. If you extend a session, the cat will lose interest and may not react to the bribe.

Now, you try to get the cat to do the action which will be rewarded.

Call its name and [click](#) the clicker (or ball-point pen) when it gets near you. IMMEDIATELY give it the reward or start to play with it.

Do this each time it does the required action when you ask it to for the next couple of days.

Then, try it with another desired action.

The focus must be on giving the reward at the same moment you use the clicker.

You may be able to make a click with your mouth and use that as the signal. That gives you more scope as you don't have to have the clicker with you to do another quick training session.

You can also encourage your kitten to do other desired actions by rewarding it and clicking when you see it doing that [action](#) without a prompt from you.

After a few successes, the cat recognizes it gets rewarded when it does what

you signal you want.

Most cats are smart enough to watch for more opportunities to do those actions.

Then, clicker training becomes a joint effort!

Health Tips

Vaccinating is Essential.

Vaccinating your cat is very important. It gives [protection](#) to your cat and also reduces risks for any other cats it comes near.

Check with your vet when the cat needs to be immunized. Your vet may recommend no vaccinations during the first 12 weeks.

The vaccinations may take several days to become effective. Check with your vet and isolate your cat from others where possible during that period.

Some facts which have only become common knowledge in recent years.

Cats don't need to be vaccinated for all diseases but you do need to get them inoculated for all those which your vet suggests.

Few inoculations give 100% full protection so you must also take some precautions to protect your pet(s) from exposure to the factors which carry the [disease](#).

Check with your vet for current advice.

If rabies has been active in your area or an area where you may take your pet, your vet will advise that you get it vaccinated although the level of occurrence may be usually low where you are.

We used to vaccinate our cats for almost everything. But, that was found to put pressure on the cats' [health](#) because of the different effects from several preparations at the same time.

Now, vaccinations include only those most likely to be encountered in that area plus those risks which are common for most cats.

There are also some breeds which are likely to need injections for some diseases.

Each injection may have some small percentage of risk for your cat which is why vets now only give those which are considered most beneficial for the type of cat in that particular [location](#).

De-Clawing is NOT Necessary

De-clawing used to be performed a lot more than it is today.

It was most often done to reduce the risk to the cat owner's [furniture](#).

The main objection is not that your furniture should be accessible to cats but that de-clawing is a big risk to the ongoing health of the cats.

When de-clawing is performed, a piece of the [bone](#) behind the claw is removed.

This makes it more difficult for the cat to walk although most appear to manage quite well.

The force of every step on that damaged bone increases the effect through the rest of the cat's life.

It's likely there is some ongoing [pain](#) as well.

It is a terrible thing to put the cat through.

The cat which is kept at the former home of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was not de-clawed when it started to take an interest in sharpening its claws on valuable mementoes.

It was simply banned from those areas.

That seems to be the best [solution](#).

De-sexing Your Kitten

De-sexing your kitten is the responsible thing to do if you are not going to be a cat breeder.

Some [people](#) used to say that a female cat should have a litter before it was de-sexed but there were not really any benefits for the cat in going through that experience and then having this surgical intervention.

Although de-sexing is a very common procedure, it is major surgery and has some risks.

Getting your vet to do it before the female has its first season is best for the cat's [health](#) and everyone else as well.

Neutering male cats is regarded as day surgery and is also strongly recommended unless you intend to breed on a commercial basis.

A unaltered male cat will cause havoc by spraying its strongly scented urine in many places to advertise its availability.

They will also travel more widely, looking for females, fighting other males and risking death from [traffic](#) and dogs.

It will fight other cats and the injuries can be serious.

Females in season will vocalize loudly to attract males.

Desexed females are less at risk of tumors and uterus infections. It also reduces the cat's stress level and the risk of serious injury.

Your vet will give you specific advice about preparing your pet for its operation and how to care for it afterward.

There are risks with every operation. Spaying the female is a more invasive procedure. Both require the patient to be anaesthetized which also always has a level of risk.

But, all vets I've heard or consulted have said the benefits are worth those risks.

Your vet will probably have a printed advice [sheet](#) for this and other common

procedures. They are also usually willing to discuss any points with their clients.

If you have any concerns, ask them for more details before the operation.

Common Health Problems

Feline Urinary Tract Infection

Your cat may get a Urinary Tract Infection from one of several causes.

The most common sign is when the cat has difficulty passing urine. It may show signs of pain and only pass a small amount or none.

Quick veterinary [consultation](#) is needed for this because of the many different possible causes and the progress of the symptoms.

Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism mostly occurs in older cats from 9 years of age.

It is caused by an excess amount of a thyroid hormone in the cat's system.

Symptoms include increased appetite and thirst.

These symptoms may also occur with some other diseases such as [diabetes](#), some types of cancer and others.

Resources

U.S.A.

Safety

Recalls, including packaged pet food.

F.D.A.

www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/default.html#Link to Animal Health

Poisons Advice

American Society Prevention Cruelty to Animals

www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/cats-plant-list

Extensive list of plants and details of risk to cats.

www.asPCA.org/animal-poison-control/poison-control-okay-or-no-way

General advice on product safety for pets when used in your home.

Poisoning Hotline (888) 426-4435

A \$65 charge may be applied to your credit [card](#).

Cat Breed Registries

A Cat Registry sets up and maintains records of the breeds which it recognizes and records, specifies the breed descriptions and the aspects of each breed which are allotted points when the cats are judged in those shows which are licensed by that registry.

Cat Clubs join the Registries and their Members can access the registries services through their [Club](#).

Cat Fanciers Association

www.cfainc.org

The Cat Fanciers Association is a Cat Registry. Its primary function is to manage its register of pedigree cats, license and promote shows which follow the rules and requirements of the [organization](#).

It also provides many other resources and services for cat owners.

The International Cat Association

www.tica.org

T.I.C.A. allows All cat breeds to compete for titles and awards at its shows.

The organization also lets household unpedigreed cats and kittens to compete for many of the same awards.

It has an education program for junior cat exhibitors and a mentorship [program](#) to assist new cat breeders.

Training Resources and Events

ICAT

<http://www.catagility.com>

This organization arranges agility competitions for cats around the U.S.A. It also maintain a register of cats which compete and provides support to clubs which run the competitions.

Feline Specialist Vets

American Association of Feline Practitioners

www.catvets.com/

This Association promotes the improvement of health and welfare of cats by supporting high standards of practice, continuing education and scientific investigation.

For cat owners, it provides brochures on cat health topics and contact details for Member feline veterinarians.

You Are Lucky!

You are very lucky to own a cat.

And your cat is lucky to have an owner that is prepared to buy a [book](#) which will help them to look after their pet better!

Cat ownership is a commitment and a privilege. Every cat and their owner can share many wonderful experiences together.

You are your cat's most valued friend and your cat is probably as good for your health as your [doctor](#)!

Eileen Mayer

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)