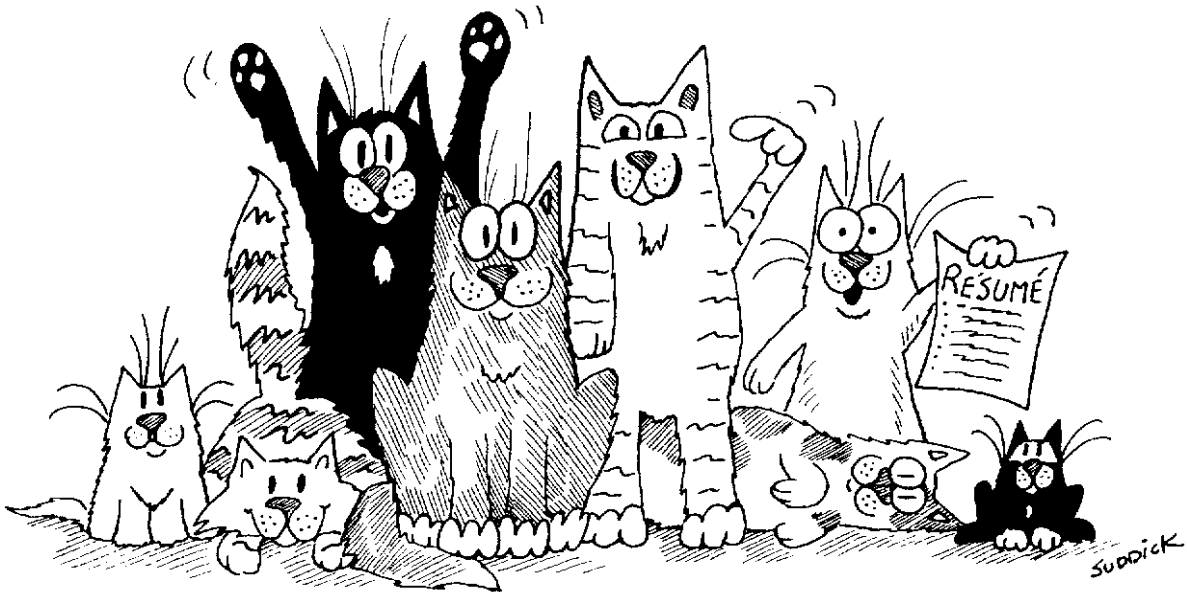


Choosing A Cat Companion



If you're ready to care for a cat (or two) for the next 12 or so years, here are some things to consider before choosing your new feline friend.

Age. The playful antics of kittens are hard to resist, but adult cats are better suited to the often clumsy and rough handling of inquisitive toddlers. Kittens also need to be house-trained, but they adapt quickly to new surroundings. Decide whether you want the more mature demeanor (with regular silliness thrown in) of an adult or constant silliness with regular napping thrown in from a kitten. If you work, consider adults, as they need less supervision.

Number. More than one cat or kitten adds to the fun and gives you a reprieve from being the playmate. Multiple felines are also great if you're out of the house a lot.

Health. Healthy cats have clear, bright eyes, pink gums, a clean nose and ears, and a smooth, shiny coat. Small black specks on the fur indicate fleas. Check the litter box to make sure the fecal matter is formed, not runny.

Personality. Look for a feline who's easy-going and responds to you. Kittens should be active, outgoing, and willing to be handled. A feline who shies away from you might be more suited to a quiet household. Adult cats should be fairly relaxed when handled.

Looks. Decide if you want long, medium, or short-haired cats. A long coat will require some combing on your part to fight matting.

Regardless of the age or the sex (both male and female cats are equally affectionate) of the cat you choose, keep your cat indoors, and you'll likely have a loving companion for the next 12 to 18 years.



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