

First-Time Cat Owner Checklist

To Buy:

- Food:** Check out our handout on Feeding Your New Cat for more about what and how to feed your new cat!
- Bowls for food and water:** Ceramic or stainless steel is recommended. For fast eaters, try a [slow feeder bowl](#).
- Bedding:** Soft fabrics and hidey holes are popular options.
- Litter box and litter:** Uncovered boxes and unscented litter are recommended. See our handout All About Litter Boxes for more.
- Nail trimmers and brush:** The right kind of brush will depend on the length of the cat's hair. For our fluffier friends, we recommend the [FURminator](#).
- Scratching post:** providing a variety of appropriate scratching surfaces can help prevent damage to your furniture. See our Claws & Scratching handout for more information.
- Toys:** a wide variety of toys with different textures, sizes, and types (think mice, wand toys, crinkly balls, catnip, and laser points). See the Play Therapy for Cats handout for more ideas!
- Collar and a name tag:** Even if your cat is an indoor cat, collars and tags can come in handy. Breakaway collars are recommended to keep your cat safe.
- Flea and tick preventative:** Talk to your vet about what brand is best for your cat.
- Sturdy cat carrier:** The right size will be big enough for your cat to comfortably stand up and turn around in (*note: cardboard carriers are not meant for long-term use*).



To Do:

- When you get home, close off one room to let your cat explore by themselves (without other pets); let them take as much time as needed to adjust and come out of their carrier at their own pace. They may even want to spend a few days in that room until they are comfortable!
- Cat-proof your home. Block off any small spaces (especially around appliances), and move fragile things away from table tops and other tempting cat perches. For more tips, check out [Jackson Galaxy's guide to cat-proofing](#).
- Within the first few weeks, use your VVMA voucher (found in your AdopterLuv adoption packet) to visit the vet and get a general wellness exam and finish any pending vaccinations/treatments.
- Place litter boxes in places that are quiet and easily accessible. Clean the litter box at least once a day; cleaning it whenever it's dirty is even better.
- [Play with your cat!](#) Lots of play time can alleviate stress, boredom, and destructive behaviors.

7 Cat Myths, Debunked

Myth #1: Cats only purr when they are happy.

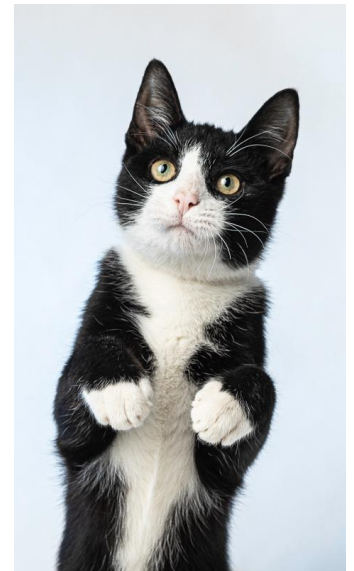
→ Cats do purr when they're happy, but they also purr when they are nervous or frightened as a way to self-sooth.

Myth #2: Cat whiskers have no purpose.

→ Whiskers serve several functions and are highly sensitive. The tip of each whisker picks up vibrations in the environment that help a cat sense where they are and what other creatures are around them. Cats also use their whiskers to measure distances, like if they can fit through a doorway. Like other hairs on a cat's body, whiskers shed. That's normal. But you should never trim them - a cat with cut whiskers will become disoriented and scared.

Myth #3: Declawing won't hurt my cat, it just removes their nails.

→ People often mistakenly believe that declawing their cat is a harmless "quick fix" for unwanted scratching. Declawing actually involves the amputation of the last bone of each toe (if performed on a human being, it would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle); this procedure and recovery is very painful for cats, and can often lead to other behavior concerns. See our handout on The Facts about Declawing for more information, and check out the Claws & Scratching handout for solutions to scratching concerns.



Myth #4: Cat fur causes allergies.

→ The reason that people are allergic to cats is due to the allergen that is present in cat saliva. Cats groom themselves with their tongues thereby spreading their saliva all over their bodies. When you pet a cat, their saliva allergens get onto your hands and can cause an allergic reaction.

Myth #5: If you can feel your cat's ribs, they're too skinny.

→ An ideal body condition for a cat is when the ribs can be easily felt through their skin. A slight waist is seen when the cat is viewed from above with a little bit of body fat. If you are unable to feel your cat's ribs, then your cat is likely overweight.

Myth #6: My cat is going outside the litter box because they are mad at me.

→ Not at all – cats don't experience emotions in the same way people do. There could be any number of reasons why a cat isn't using the box. Some of the most common reasons are underlying medical issues (i.e. a urinary tract infection), a change in their environment (a new cat/dog/baby/home/household member), a disruption in their schedule (i.e. your job has new hours), a dirty litter box, or a change in the litter box (location, un/covers, new litter). Always start by visiting the vet to rule out any medical issues, and then try to find out what has changed and work to resolve the issue.

Myth #7: Cats love milk.

→ Once grown, cats are lactose intolerant. When they are kittens they can drink their mother's milk but after they are grown, milk will likely make them sick.