



Adoption Guidelines

Here are suggested guidelines to help you find a responsible, loving home for the cat you need to place.

Advertising for a New Home

There are many ways to find a good home for a cat or kitten. Advertising in the Classified Pet Column of a local newspaper or a major metropolitan newspaper is one of the best!

Interview potential adopters on the phone, then meet with them, either at their home or yours. The more people you reach, the better chance you have of finding a good home.

All cats should be current on their annual vaccinations.

Also, put up notices in community centers, veterinarians' offices, pet supply stores, or anywhere else where many people congregate.

Notes:

- We have found that listing your cat's breed or type at the beginning in CAPS catches the eye of someone who is looking for that specific breed or mix. Keep the information brief.
- If you know the cat is not good with children, or other animals, include that in your ad.
- Beware of people pretending to be a "family" who front for dealers who sell to research labs or dog-fighting rings. It is well-known that the brutal, illegal dog-fighting contingent is looking for kittens and cats on which to practice their fighting.
- Important!!! Please notice that none of the ad samples says "free to good home". This is deliberate. Experience shows us that when people pay something for an animal, they will value it more.

Ad Copy Examples

CAT Yng spd tortie, lng-hair. Loves children/people. Playful Owner allergic. \$75 (000)000-0000

CAT Elegant, 2 yr spd Blu Tabby 80% love, 20% shy. Dog ok. Baby allrgc. \$70.00. (000) 000-0000

CAT Georg blk, wht & tan spd F. Yng, petite & very sweet! Ownr transfrd/hrtbrkn. \$70.00 000-0000

BURMESE X "Casey" is loving, affec. cuddly, mid-age nuet M. Ownr mst relinq. \$70.00 (000)000-0000

CAT Spd, beaut; yng silver/wht. So shy; crying for one-ownr attn. Needs wrm lap \$75.00 (000)000-0000

ORANGE Tabby kitten 2mos. Very rare female. Full of life. Lap cat. Healthy! \$75.00 (000)000-0000

Screening People Who Answer Your Ad

The best homes for animals are responsible, stable homes.

The kind of home that are most likely to work out are where there is a family (but see cautions around young children below) or with an older person who has the time to spend with a new companion cat.

We look very carefully at people who are single, and whose job may necessitate travel to a place where it would be difficult to take the cat. The same holds true with students and unrelated roommates whose lifestyles may preclude their making a long-term/lifetime commitment to the cat.

You want to be sure that you are dealing with a responsible person, and that they have sufficient funds to give proper care to their new companion cat.

Telephone Interviews

Through some well-chosen questions, you can decide whether the applicant meets some of the basic requirements and can be considered as a potential adopter.

Dealing with Young People

If the caller is obviously a child, ask to speak to an adult. If the caller sounds young, but you're not sure, feel free to ask his/her age. Teenagers and students do not tend to have stable lives or dwellings. If the teenager lives at home, then ask to speak to an adult. We do not adopt out cats to people who cannot provide a long-term permanent home. Young people tend to move around: college, missionary work, military, etc. it is usually the cat who suffers in these situations.

For this reason, all adopters must be over 21. Use this situation as a way of educating the person. Suggest that they do not get a cat until they know what is happening in their lives, and can provide the cat with a permanent, secure home.

Things to ask during a telephone interview

In a telephone interview, include the following questions:

1. Is this cat for you, or for someone else?

If the cat is for another person, then tell them that you need to speak directly to the prospective owner, gifts for other people of live animals can be a terrible mistake.

If the cat is for a child, then tell the person that the cat needs to be a "family" pet, as children do not have the attention span necessary to be responsible for a cat for the 12–20 years of its life.

2. Do you live in a house? An apartment?

3. Does the house/apartment have a yard?

4. Is the yard completely fence? How high is the fence?

5. Does the yard have a gate?

6. Will the cat be an indoor or an outdoor cat?

From these six answers you can build a profile of the person. If they plan to let the cat out, check the area for hazards. Cars, wildlife, free-roaming predatory dogs, aggressive tomcats, secondary poisoning, and contagious feline illnesses are just some of the hazards cats face out of doors. At the very least, urge them to keep the cat inside at night, and ask them to consider keeping him/her inside at all times. Tell them that an indoor cat will be healthier and much safer, and will be a more attentive and devoted companion. Also suggest that cat enclosures or cat proofing a fenced yard are an excellent option.

7. Are you planning to have the cat declawed?

Do not adopt to someone who is planning to declaw a cat. You can explain to them that it is cruel to the cat as it is amputation and can not only cause behavior problems such as biting and litterbox problems, but it also prevents the cat from defending itself if it gets out. If people are worried about their furniture, there are ways of preventing it from being scratched by using scratching posts, spray bottle of water, etc. Call (415) 381-1440 for other ideas.

8. Have you had a cat before? If so, what has happened to this cat?

Responses to the previous pet ownership question can give you a good idea of stability, income level and responsibility. We have found that letting people talk quite a bit in this area elicits information. If there is a pattern of neglect – "Oh, my last were all run over, given away, poisoned, stolen, etc." – **this is not a good home**. One negative incident doesn't immediately rule them out, but does require closer examination. If, for example, the previous cat was run over, what precautions has the person made to ensure that this is unlikely to happen again? You need to decide if it was a tragic accident, or due to improper supervision, or neglect.

9. Do you have children? If so, what are their ages?

Children can be blessing or a curse to a cat. Many cats and kittens have been badly treated by children. Many animal organizations have issued guidelines that no kittens are to be adopted by families with children under 6 years old. This is a guideline followed by many responsible organizations, even though some people have problems with it. Children under 6 have inadvertently killed baby animals by picking them up like a soft toy. There have been many incidents where small children have been bitten or scratched by a frustrated kitten or cat who cannot escape an eager toddler who wants to play. Usually it is the cat who gets blamed, and both child and animal can be badly hurt. However, a nice adult cat who is used to being around children and who is known to be gentle can be a wonderful family pet, even with very small children. In a good home, parents control the interaction between the cat and the children. Look for this supervision when placing the cat.

10. How do you plan to help the cat adjust to the new home?

A quiet room with the cat's food and water, scratching post and litterbox is the best place to house the new cat. Allow exploration of the rest of the house gradually. It is not unusual for a new cat to hide. It is best to provide a room where a cat can't hide in an inaccessible area such as under a bed. Never pull a cat out from under a bed. Bathrooms can be a good "quiet room" as long as they have a window.

Be patient. Many adult cats require weeks to adjust, as any change in routine is very stressful. Urge them to spend lots of time their new cat, and soon the new cat will begin to trust them and the new surroundings.

Urge them to confine the cat STRICTLY INDOORS for a minimum of 3-4 weeks. Watch for open doors, windows, and loose screens. Use this time to establish a bond with the new cat. If they plan to allow the cat outdoors, do so gradually with supervision. No cat should be allowed outdoors until it is sterilized, vaccinated and has had all of its leukemia shots. The more they keep the cat indoors, the more the cat will become attached to them.

Other household cats will need extra attention and should not meet the new cat up close until after they have become used to the sounds and smells of one another. Suggest that they keep their new cat separated from other household cats for the first week. Supervise carefully when they finally meet face-to-face.

Children should be supervised to be sure that they are gentle and do not over-handle the cat. It is best that small children do not pick up and carry the cat, as they risk being scratched if the cat struggles to free itself. Kittens are very fragile. Teach the children that cats need to be left alone when sleeping, eating, or using the litterbox. Cats have varying tolerance levels for handling and they may bite or scratch if provoked.

11. How many hours would the cat be alone during the day?

The number of hours that the animal will be alone needs to be taken into account. A young cat can get very lonely – and destructive! Many an adoption fails for this reason. A lonely kitten can scratch the furniture just for something to do. People need to know that provisions need to be made for a young cat while the family is away at work or school.

Safety concern: Kittens are very curious, which can lead to injury or death. Hazards: washer/dryer, objects that can be knocked or pulled over, cords, string, dental floss. "Baby-proof" the home as one would for a toddler.

Scratching: Cats need a scratching station: a high sturdy post or corrugated cardboard scratcher, fireplace log or a rough piece of wood. Correct inappropriate scratching with a rattling can, or squirt bottle.

The ideal situation is where someone is home much of the time. Since this not always possible, a companion animal as a buddy and/or toys to chew on and play with, make an enormous difference. Rotate the cat's toys to make the environment interesting. The cat may become bored if there is not stimulation. Locking a cat out all day can present many dangers. At the very least, urge them to keep the cat inside at night, and ask them to consider keeping him/her inside at all times.

12. Do you own the home, or are you renting?

13. Does your lease allow cats?

14. May we have your landlord's telephone number?

If a person is renting, you need to confirm with the landlord that they have permission to have a cat. Make sure that the cat they want to adopt fits in the landlord's guideline.

15. Are you willing have someone come and visit your home to see where the cat will be living?

If they are unwilling to have someone visit their home, it is probably not a good one. If they are willing, then it is up to you to decide to visit or not. Sometimes if you know your area well, you can determine the kind of home it will be from the address.

Is it the Right Home?

One of the hardest parts of doing an adoption is deciding if you are placing the cat in a good home. The repercussions of your decision will last for the cat's lifetime.

It is very important to **listen to your instincts**. You might find that someone has answered all the questions correctly, presented themselves very well in a personal interview, yet something doesn't feel right. **Go with the feeling!** Always sleep on it, and always take the cat to the new home so you can inspect the home and the cat has the continuity with you and the new home.

If you are not sure that they are right for the cat, you can simply say that other people are interested, or that you're considering other possible homes (which you will indeed need to do), and that you will let them know. This can avoid unpleasant scenes and give you time to decide if the people and the cat are right for each other.

Remember that you are under no obligation to adopt a cat to anyone. Owning a cat is a privilege as well as a responsibility. You don't have to convince someone to take a cat; they have to convince you they deserve one!

Watch out for "Bunchers"

A buncher is someone who acquires animals from people on the pretext of wanting a new pet, and then sells the animal for profit to a research laboratory! If you live in or near a city where there are universities or research hospitals, be warned. People posing as prospective pet owners may try to obtain a cat from you, and sell it to a lab or institution for medical research experiments. These people can be so good at fooling others that this has become a successful scam in many areas. Asking for a driver's license, personal references and a reference from a vet can be a good precaution, although new residents to an area and first-time owners may not have a vet. Drawing people out, visiting their homes, and other references can also be a big help in exposing bunchers.

It is important to charge for the cat and to discuss the following at the time of adoption:

People value a thing more if they've paid for it! A minimum of \$45.00 is suggested for cats. Set a higher price on a purebred cat. Be sure the adopter knows that most of the animal's big expenses have been covered: FELV/FIV tests, worming, spaying/neutering, vaccinations, etc. Give them the veterinarian records for the cat. If additional vet care is necessary, note the dates when this care is due. Discuss any potential behavior concerns and solutions so the adopter knows that it sometimes takes a little adjustment to blend a new cat into a household. Your support at the beginning will help the new family through its transition. If it becomes clear they are simply not interested in solving the problem, don't try to convince them. Arrange to take the cat back. It is important to mention this possibility to people when they adopt, so that they don't end up giving the animal to an unsuitable situation if things don't work out. Sometimes people return a cat and give different excuses when the reality is they just don't want to deal with the cat (i.e. they weren't ready for all the work, attention, or care a cat needs).