

Top 10 tips for cat owners

🐾 It is essential that all kittens are socialized with people and domestic environments at an early age. The period during which cats can be socialized in this way is very short – between the age of 2 and 7 weeks – this means that where you obtain a kitten is very important. Make sure that your kitten has had lots of handling by different people – if the breeder won't let you touch or meet mum, walk away!

🐾 Learn to speak cat! Cats have a communication system all of their own. They use body language and vocalization to communicate with us – and this means that we can often misinterpret what they are saying to us. For example, if your cat puts his ears flat back to his head and his eyes are narrowed, he is clearly saying that he doesn't want to be cuddled!

🐾 Although some cats enjoy the company of other cats in the same household, they are not truly a social species. This means that they will only share their home in harmony if there are enough cat resources to go around. If you keep more than one cat, ensure that there are plenty of warm and comfy resting places, feeding dishes and litter trays to make every cat feel as if he or she has their rightful share!

🐾 Use cat manners! Some cats love to be picked up and cuddled, others simply hate it! It is good feline manners to wait until your cat approaches you for affection – rather than the other way around. Cats invite stroking and petting by approaching humans with their tails up, and by rubbing on you. This is so that their scent is mixed with yours – developing a common bond between family members.

🐾 Beware of cat burglars! On the whole, a cat's worst nightmare is to have his home invaded by another cat. Unfortunately, this often happens as neighbouring cats may come in through the cat flap, and maraud through a resident cat's home. This can lead to ongoing stress – which some cats then cope with by marking indoors with urine or faeces – which usually leads to stress in humans too! Prevention is often better than cure in this instance – if you suspect that your cat may be anxious about having his home invaded, block the cat flap and let him in and out by opening the door – that way you will be acting as his body guard!

🐾 Start as you mean to go on! This rule is very simple. Don't allow your cat to practice behaviours that you will regret later. Many owners allow their cuddly little kitten to play with them by encouraging them to chase their hands or feet. This may seem cute when the kitten is tiny – but is no fun at all when your cat has learned to attack you as an adult. In just the same way, allowing your kitten up on work surfaces will ensure that he or she does it forever – so be strong willed and maintain house rules from the start.

🐾 It is important that your cat should have some form of identification if he or she goes out. Micro chipping or a tag on your cat's collar are the most popular means. However, collars need to be of the break-away or elasticated variety to ensure that he or she can free itself if it becomes entangled when on an outdoor adventure!

🐾 Messy problems indoors are one of the most common difficulties cat owners face with their pets. Many of these are caused by lack of appropriate toilet facilities in the house. In general, there should be one litter tray per cat plus one, and these should be kept scrupulously clean. The trays should be positioned well away from where the cat is fed – after all, no one likes eating in the loo! Some cats are very fussy about the type of litter that they prefer. The favourites are normally made from fine-grained but heavy particles, such as fullers earth.

🐾 All cats need access to drinking water, especially if they are fed a dried food. However, many seem to dislike drinking tap water from a bowl, and seem to prefer either rain water or drinking straight from a running tap! Beware of toxic substances around the house and garage that your cat may try to taste – pain

killers, many human medicines and anti-freeze are potentially fatal to cats.

☛ Train your cat! Yes, it is possible, and can be fun! Training your cat to come when called is easy – just call your cat whenever you are doing to feed him or her and sometimes just for a special titbit. It is also easy to teach most cats to sit on command, and to do simple tricks, such as beg or give a paw. Always use rewards in training and be patient – a cat will only respond if he or she wants to!!