Cat Adoption Checklist

A cat adoption checklist guiding new owners through adopting a cat, from shelter visit to cat-proofing and first days home.

Before you adopt a cat

- [ ] Assess your space and whether your cat will be indoor or have safe access outside.
- [ ] Decide on an age and temperament that fits your lifestyle.
- [ ] Confirm housing rules, pet deposits, and any limits if you rent.
- [ ] Budget for food, litter, vet care, and supplies.
- [ ] Discuss responsibilities and a daily routine with your household.
- [ ] Consider how a cat will fit with children or existing pets.

Visiting the shelter or rescue

- [ ] Research reputable shelters, humane societies, and cat rescues.
- [ ] Confirm hours and whether you need an appointment.
  Call ahead to be sure a cat is still available.
- [ ] Watch how cats respond to people and to gentle approach.
- [ ] Ask staff about each cat's history, health, and personality.
- [ ] Note which cats match your criteria for a follow-up meet.
- [ ] Be patient if the right cat is not there on your first visit.

Meeting and matching

- [ ] Sit calmly and let the cat approach you on its own terms.
- [ ] Watch body language for relaxation, fear, or overstimulation.
- [ ] Note whether the cat seeks attention or prefers space.
- [ ] Ask about litter habits and behavior with other animals.
- [ ] Introduce household members gently during the meet.
- [ ] Choose based on personality fit, not only looks.

Adoption paperwork and fees

- [ ] Confirm the adoption fee and what it includes.
- [ ] Collect vaccination, spay or neuter, and microchip records.
- [ ] Sign the adoption contract and keep your copy.
- [ ] Update the microchip registration to your details.
- [ ] Get the cat's current food and the litter type it knows.
- [ ] Ask about any recommended follow-up vet care.

Cat-proofing your home

- [ ] Remove toxic plants, foods, and household chemicals.
- [ ] Secure cords, blinds, and small swallowable objects.
- [ ] Close off unsafe gaps, balconies, and tilting windows.

- [ ] Set up a litter box in a quiet, low-traffic spot.
- [ ] Provide food, water, a bed, and a scratching post.
- [ ] Create a safe room where your cat can decompress at first.

First days home

- [ ] Start your cat in one quiet room before the whole house.
- [ ] Keep noise, visitors, and changes to a minimum.
- [ ] Show your cat the litter box, food, and water early.
- [ ] Let your cat explore at its own pace without forcing contact.
- [ ] Introduce existing pets slowly through scent and supervised meets.
- [ ] Important: This is general information, not veterinary advice. Schedule a checkup and consult a veterinarian about vaccinations, parasite prevention, and your cat's health.