

KITTEN BUYER'S CHECKLIST

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So you are all excited and determined to purchase a pedigreed kitten. This entails a financial outlay which should be taken seriously, because not only is it a considerable amount of money (possibly thousands of dollars) but also a kitten is a long-term commitment. It's not the same as splurging on a handbag or designer clothing.

Assuming you've done your research on which breed will fit best into your household, what other things should you consider before taking the plunge and handing over your hard-earned cash?

1. Never send a deposit before receiving the sales contract, unless you are prepared to "lose" that deposit if something goes awry.
 - a. There's no "cool down" period once you've given over money to a breeder, no turning around the next day with buyer's remorse and expecting a refund. So sleep on any decision at least one night.
2. Read that sales contract!
 - a. I know that this is a pet and so you might think it is not important, but you are also likely expending a considerable sum for this pet.
 - b. Be satisfied with the health guarantee (standard is 72 hours from receipt of kitten), replacement/refund terms, registration papers mentioned (it may be a pet but if you are paying you deserve to have proof of its breed)
3. If putting down a deposit on an unborn kitten, make sure there is provision for a refund within a reasonable time if that kitten never is born.
4. Make sure you get to know the breeder adequately before handing over a deposit.
 - a. Meeting in person is of course preferable, but if not then expect a series of emails &/or phone calls where you get a sense that this is a person that will be available to help you with your kitten after they have your money.
5. Make sure you know the parents and other background behind your chosen kitten.
 - a. Again seeing in person is best, but alternatively expect to see numerous pictures of both parents, adult as well as kitten pictures. Either on the breeder's website or via emails.
 - b. Ask the breeder questions about their personality and expect to hear stories that demonstrate their good or playful nature.
6. If selecting the kitten from pictures, make sure they are recently taken. For example, if the kitten is 6 months old then don't choose the kitten from pictures from when it was 2 months old. Often you can check the timestamp on picture files.
7. Health Aspects: this is the most important attribute; you do not wish to purchase a kitten that dies early nor take on a kitten that will cost thousands in vet bills because it is sick from arrival.
 - a. Be sure that no signs of illness are visible in any pictures of the kitten: gunk, redness, watering or blinking eyes, matted dull fur, hunched unhappy body.
 - b. Ask what testing the cattery routinely does of its breeding cats: cardiac testing, general bloodwork, FeLV/FIV, fecal parasites, etc.
 - c. Be prepared to return a kitten if it arrives ill, listen to your vet when they tell you to return the kitten or be prepared for the prospect of thousands of dollars in vet bills potentially to nurse back to health.
8. Temperament: Also extremely important, you are purchasing a pet not an ornament for your house.
 - a. Consider genetics, are the parents very sociable relaxed kitties? You can easily establish that in a cattery visit, otherwise you need clues from pictures that show the cat is not uptight and nervous in all shots
 - b. Socialization is the other half to temperament, so be certain that this is a priority to the breeder of the kitten you select. How much time a day does this litter receive, how many other litters are being raised at the same time?
9. Type: It is reasonable to expect your kitten to be recognizable as its breed, even if as a pet this is not as critical as its health and temperament.
 - a. If selecting the kitten before 6-8 weeks much of the choice is guesswork, for example spots always seem black at birth but can easily fade before the cat is a year old (look at adult pics of parents for clues), ears are large in many breeds as kittens and they "grow into them" so that the eventual size is not large. Pictures of previous kittens grown up can help, as can pictures of the parents as adults.
10. Be wary of a breeder that wants to send you a kitten too early. TICA's (the International Cat Association) recommendation is a minimum of 12 weeks of age, old enough to have had two vaccinations and additionally be independent enough to adapt easier to a new home.