

Choosing a Name for Your Kitten

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Choosing a name for a new cat or kitten is an important decision. The name will be used to relate to the cat for the rest of his or her life. Take some time in choosing a name, and keep the following suggestions in mind:

Avoid names that sound like commands

When choosing a name for your new pet, choose one that does not sound like a common command. Pets rely on 'sounds like' rather than 'means' when they try to understand what we are communicating to them. As a result, names like 'Rum,' 'Puff,' 'Joe' can end up sounding like 'come,' 'off,' or 'no!' Your cat will not know which way to turn when you call.

Avoid names that sound like other names

Just as your cat's name should not sound like a command, it also should not be similar to the names of other household members (human or animal!). This would result in confusion for your cat, and the cat's namesake.

Keep the name short

Other things to consider are the length of the name. In general, shorter names with one or two syllables will be easier for your pet to recognize than longer names.

Try to use "hard" consonants and vowels

Hard consonants, such as 'k,' 'd,' and 't' are easier to hear and distinguish than soft consonants such as 'f,' 's,' or 'm.' The same is true for vowels. Thus, names such as Katy, Deedee, and Tiger are ones that a cat will often recognize and respond to faster than Fern, Shana, or Merl.

Choose a name he or she can grow into

If you are naming a kitten, remember he or she will grow into an adult, so you want to choose a name appropriate for each stage of his or her life.

Be willing to call the name in public

Finally, be sure to pick a name you will feel comfortable calling in public. A name you think is personal and cute may take on a different connotation when called in your yard in the event your cat gets outside. Also, don't choose a name that appears funny and may make people laugh at your cat.

Some of the most popular cat names in North America are:

- Callie
- Max/Maxwell
- Missy/Mitsy
- Morris
- Princess
- Pumpkin/Punkin
- Rusty
- Sam/Sammy/Samantha
- Sassy
- Shadow
- Simon
- Smokey
- Tiger/Tigger

There are many books and web sites devoted to naming cats. Have fun exploring!