<http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/links.html>

"A dog is man's best friend." That common saying may contain some truth, but dogs are not the only animal friend whose companionship people enjoy. For many people, a cat is their best friend. **Despite what dog lovers may believe, cats make excellent housepets as they are good companions, they are civilized members of the household, and they are easy to care for.**

*In the first place, people enjoy the companionship of cats.* Many cats are affectionate. They will snuggle up and ask to be petted, or scratched under the chin. Who can resist a purring cat? If they're not feeling affectionate, cats are generally quite playful. They love to chase balls and feathers, or just about anything dangling from a string. They especially enjoy playing when their owners are participating in the game. Contrary to popular opinion, cats can be trained. Using rewards and punishments, just like with a dog, a cat can be trained to avoid unwanted behavior or perform tricks. Cats will even fetch!

*In the second place, cats are civilized members of the household.* Unlike dogs, cats do not bark or make other loud noises. Most cats don't even meow very often. They generally lead a quiet existence. Cats also don't often have "accidents." Mother cats train their kittens to use the litter box, and most cats will use it without fail from that time on. Even stray cats usually understand the concept when shown the box and will use it regularly. Cats do have claws, and owners must make provision for this. A tall scratching post in a favorite cat area of the house will often keep the cat content to leave the furniture alone. As a last resort, of course, cats can be declawed.

*Lastly, one of the most attractive features of cats as housepets is their ease of care.* Cats do not have to be walked. They get plenty of exercise in the house as they play, and they do their business in the litter box. Cleaning a litter box is a quick, painless procedure. Cats also take care of their own grooming. Bathing a cat is almost never necessary because under ordinary circumstances cats clean themselves. Cats are more particular about personal cleanliness than people are. In addition, cats can be left home alone for a few hours without fear. Unlike some pets, most cats will not destroy the furnishings when left alone. They are content to go about their usual activities until their owners return.

Cats are low maintenance, civilized companions. People who have small living quarters or less time for pet care should appreciate these characteristics of cats. However, many people who have plenty of space and time still opt to have a cat because they love the cat personality. In many ways, cats are the ideal housepet.

**Knowing How to Live Alone**

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| Introduction  "Hook"     Connecting Information    **Thesis statement** | "Alone one is never lonely," says the poet and author Mary Sarton in praise of living along. Most people, however, are terrified of living alone. They are used to living with others -- children with parents, roommates with roommates, friends with friends, husbands with wives. When the statistics catch up with them, therefore, they are rarely prepared**. Chances are high that most adult men and women will need to know how to live along, briefly or longer, at some time in their lives**. |
| First Body Paragraph  **Topic sentence**  Background: Statistics  And how they relate to the thesis.  *(The background paragraph is not always included in an academic essay.)* | **In the United States, circumstances often force people to live alone**. For example, many high school and college graduates move away from their hometowns and continue their educations or take jobs. Most schools assign roommates, but employers usually expect people to take care of their own living arrangements. Also, married people might feel they will always be together, but currently one out of two marriages ends in divorce. An even sadder statistic concerns the death of a spouse. Estimates are that in the next twenty years eight out of ten married women will become widows, usually late in life. These facts show that most people have to live by themselves at least once in their lives whether they want to or not. |
| Second Body Paragraph  **Topic sentence**  support | **One good way to prepare for living alone is to learn how to take care of practical matters**. For example, some students and newly single people might not know how to do something as simple as opening a checking account. When making arrangements alone, they might be too tense to find out that they can compare banks as well as the benefits of various types of accounts. Similarly, making major purchases is something people living alone might have to handle. When divorced or widowed people were married, perhaps the other sopuse did the choosing or the couple make the decisions together. But how long can a person manage with a refrigerator that cannot be repaired or a car that will not run? After shopping around and making price comparisons, most people find that these decisions are much less complicated than they seem at first. |
| Third Body Paragraph  **Topic sentence**  support | **The confidence that single people get from learning to deal with practical matters can boost their chances for establishing new friendships**. When singles feel self-reliant, they can have an easier time getting out and meeting new people. For instance, some students are in the habit of always going to classes with a friend. When they break this dependency, they can be pleasantly surprised to find that they can concentrate better on the course and also have a chance to make some new friends. Likewise, the idea of going alone to the beach or to parties can paralyze some singles. Once they make the attempt, however, people alone usually find that almost everyone welcomes a new, friendly face. |
| Fourth Body Paragraph  **Topic sentence**  support | **Probably the most difficult problem for people living alone is dealing with feelings of loneliness**. First, they have to understand the feeling. Some people confuse being alone with feeling lonely. They need to remember that unhappily married people can feel very lonely with spouses, and anyone can suffer from loneliness in a room crowded with friends. Second, people living alone have to fight any tencendies to get depressed. Depression can lead to much unhappiness, including conpulsive behavior like overeating or spending too much money. Depression can also drive people to fill the feeling of emptiness by getting into relationships or jobs that they do not truly want. Third, people living alone need to get involved in useful and pleasurable activities, such as volunteering their services to help others. |
| Conclusion:  Call for awarness | People need to ask themselves, "If I had to live alone starting tomorrow morning, would I know how?" If the answer is "No," they need to become conscious of what living alone calls for. People who face up to life usually do not have to hide from it later on. |
|  | *From Handbook for Writers by Lynn Quitman Troyka, Simon and Schuster, pp 64-66.* |