

----- *feeding your kitten*

Many cat owners use dry food as the main staple for cats, with canned food given as once a day supplement. The exact opposite is true & a blended diet based more around wet food is recommended throughout life. Kittens raised on wet (canned) food tend to avoid some health problems partly attributed to dry foods. Young kittens should be fed a quality canned food 3-4 times a day, during their first 5-6 months, with dry food continually available all day. It is best to choose a dry food formulated specifically for kittens. Kittens have special nutritional needs to promote growth and development, such as extra protein for muscle development; fat for energy, fatty acids to carry vitamins; extra vitamins & minerals for strong bones & teeth. If your cat begins to be overweight as she or he reaches adulthood, you will need to limit the amount of food. Put 'wet' food down for 15 or 20 minutes, then remove it. Remember to keep fresh water in a clean bowl available all day too! Never feed kittens table scraps or any other part of your meal. Feeding cats 'human' food is inadvisable. This leads to poor nutrition & poor feeding habits. Veterinarians will give you great advice on the right diet for your cat. If you are trying to raise a very young kitten (without its mother) you can purchase commercially-produced kitten formulas packed with nutrition. Give your kitten a variety of foods, changing what you give them regularly. Kittens can become very bored with same food day in day out & they may refuse to eat. Do not give cats or kittens cow's milk as many kittens are lactose intolerant, also it can cause tummy upsets & severe diarrhoea. Specially formulated milk for cats & kittens is available.

Seek veterinary attention if your pet changes Behaviour or becomes inactive; this may indicate the pet has an illness.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for proper pet practices. Be prepared to take an ill pet to a Veterinarian & know which Veterinarian in your area can treat your pet.



check-list ✓ ***Your pet Kitten requires...***

- Cat Litter, Box & Scoop
- Scratching Post or Claw Mat
- Water Bowl
- 'Dry' & 'Wet' Food Bowls of appropriate size
- Collar (adjustable with identification tags ASAP)
- Chew & Exercise Toys (non-eatable)
- Sleeping basket (optional)
- Travel Crate or Kennel (optional - full size)

Starter's care guide for Kittens



A few basic steps for caring, maintaining & socializing your first pet cat.

Learn all you can about the type of cat you are interested in to see if they are right for you & your lifestyle. With a little knowledge & understanding, you will have a better experience & healthier, happier pet. Cats were one of the first animals kept as pets & one of the most adored & revered.

----- *choosing the right kitten*

Take a moment & examine your own lifestyle & choose a cat that best fits into it. A cat that is incompatible with your lifestyle becomes an effort, something you should want to avoid as a pet owner. Never allow yourself, & don't put yourself in the position, of resenting your pet for being an inconvenience. Cats bond strongly with their owners & will demand your love & attention. The more love & attention the cat receives, the happier it, & you, will be. Cats are very curious & active animals that need amusement & exercise. They can be mildly destructive inside, or roam when outside, if not entertained properly or sufficiently.

Consider what the cat's life will be like living with you in your home. How much exercise will you be giving it? What size home do you have? How much outside time will the cat get? Will the cat be in a social area with lots of people or in an intimate environment? How much time will you devote to the animal? Are there other animals in your house? Is this a stay inside pet or will the cat be with you regularly on your daily activities? What you are looking for in a cat? Pure breed or mix? Big or small? Long, short, or hairless? Factors you need to remember include grooming & exercise needs, temperament & social behaviour, or potential future health issues (including your own). Lastly, are you, or any one else in contact, allergic to cats? Cat allergies are very common amongst people & it is wise to expose yourself to the cat if possible, before making the commitment.

There is no denying that your kitten will live a longer, safer life if kept indoors, but many choose to let their cat roam free outside. Allowed to roam freely, they are subject to a number of risks. Vehicles, dogs, predators, poisons from found food, & even humans (steal or harm them). Consider an indoor-only lifestyle, or leash train the kitten. The cat will live longer, & safer. The cat population exploded, along with the number of unwanted cats, due to owners allowing fertile cats to run free outside without supervision. If you plan to allow your cat outside unsupervised, at the very least, have the cat spayed or neutered as soon as it's ready.

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----- kitten biting or scratching

A young kitten will pounce, chase, wrestle, bite or scratch it's siblings & mother. This is generally regarded as 'mock' aggression. It is part of a kitten's normal development to play aggressively. They are learning the predatory skills that a cat in the wild would need to know for survival. Most kittens grow out of the aggressive stage & become sweet natured, but some remain aggressive. Don't play rough with your kitten, biting & scratching usually occurs as a result of the owner's actions. Many owners will wrestle the kitten with their hands, letting the kitten bite or scratch them. When it grows & the kitten's strength increases it can often hurt you & draw blood. Try diverting his attention away from your body parts by having a selection of soft toys. Shake the toy or move it in an enticing manner. Look for a soft toy of about the kitten's size, this helps the kitten adopt a toy as a playmate.

Withdraw play if things get really rough & the kitten begins to bite or scratch you. If kitty becomes overly aggressive, you simply end the game. Clap of your hands, walk away from the situation, & ignore the cat. Make it clear to the kitten that you will not be a party to rough games. Be consistent & don't give your kitten mixed messages. Don't allow aggressive behaviour one day & then the next day punish for it. Use a stern voice with a loud 'NO' & stop playing. Use techniques such as squirting the kitten with water from a plant spray bottle, but only as a last resort if nothing else works. This is a harsh a punishment for a little kitten. It's all about reward & pleasant experiences to a kitten.

You will never stop a cat from scratching, but you can divert its claws from yourself, furnishings or carpets to something more appropriate. Provide the cat with a scratching post. All cats need to scratch. Scratching helps keep the claws in top condition & helps remove a transparent sheath that grows over the claws. Whenever you see your cat scratching the furniture tell it NO, stop the kitten, then gently take it to the scratching post. Do this in a gentle way so as not to scare him. Place his paws on the scratching post & simulate scratching. Make it an enjoyable experience with praise & soft petting. Most cats will learn to use the cat scratching post within a few days if the experience is pleasurable.

----- a kitten's own sleep spot

You must provide your kitten with warmth, especially in cold climates. They are used to sleeping with their mothers & kittens will seek out warm places to sleep. This is why they love to curl up on your lap or will join you in your bed (not only for company but for warmth). If you don't want your cat sleeping in your bed, it is best to let your kitten know what you expect from it at the beginning. Create or purchase a bed (or basket) sleep area & train the cat to sleep there. Put his bed in a quiet place, away from busy areas & encourage it to sleep there with soft petting sessions. Warm & away from drafts. Introduce the kitten to this idea early. By having been trained to sleep in a basket helps make sure your kitten is safe during the times that you aren't home or watching. Don't allow the kitten to investigate areas like the dryer, behind the TV or fridge, stoves, near fireplaces & furnaces, or other dangerous places.

----- house training

Litterbox training is one of the first things you will actually teach your kitten. Part of the training will be on how you monitor your kitty. Often a kitten has had some basic house training by the time you receive it. Most kittens will readily adapt to a litter box, especially if they were raised with a mother cat. Otherwise, it's usually easy to train a kitten to the box. Make sure it's easily accessible, filled with a quality litter. Start with two inches of litter & experiment until you find the ideal depth for your cat. Litter clumps urine & feces into solid "chunks", easily spooned or scooped out of the box during cleaning. Immediately after a meal, place your kitten in the box. The box should be placed for maximum privacy, away from noise, & with an easy "escape route". Be consistent & patient. You may have to demonstrate by guiding their paw for a few scratches in the litter, but they quickly get the idea. Cats have a strong natural instinct to avoid soiling their own area. If you are consistent & patient, this natural urge for cleanliness makes house training fairly easy. The rule of thumb is; that in a multi-cat household, you should provide one litter box for each cat resident, & at least one extra.

Poor litter box maintenance is often the cause of litter box mishaps. Cats hate stinky litter boxes, & may search for substitutes (a corner, the carpet, laundry basket, in the closet, pillows). What may smell clean to you, may not be so to them. A cat's sense of smell is 14 times more powerful than our own. Physical problems may be the cause also when a mature cat begins to miss the litter box, & a phone call or visit to the vet might be in order.

----- starting out healthy

Call your veterinarian before you pick up your kitten & ask to have the kitten examined as soon after you become the owner as possible. If there are other cats in the family, isolate your kitten in his "safe room" until he has been cleared by your vet'. Between 6 & 16 weeks of age, kittens lose the disease protection they received from their mothers & become able to form their own immunity to disease. Each veterinarian will have a preferred protocol for vaccinating kittens & for follow-up vaccinations throughout life. If the cat is healthy & unvaccinated, your veterinarian may suggest vaccinating right away. Build a relationship with your vet' & have the cat checked over once a year, healthy or not. Most veterinarians do a great job giving advice to people who have not owned a cat before. Many will know about future issues your particular cat may face, or behaviour or special dietary needs. The doctor will also advise you on prevention of worms/fleas depending on your circumstances (inside/outside, or from other pets). Cats can vomit hairballs. An occasional hairball is no cause for alarm, but if your cat is vomiting up a hairball more than once or twice a month, it's time to think about a trip to your veterinarian. It's important to make sure the problem is only hairballs & not something more serious. Avoid letting the kitten around stairs until about 6 months old. You can start putting a collar on after about 10 - 12 weeks, just for them to get used to it around its neck, & leash train your kitten when around 4 months old. (Use an 'H' shaped harness, rather than a collar, as collars are too easily escaped from.)