

GET ME HOME

KITTEN PRIMER

Congratulations on your new kitten!
Here's how to get your kitten off to a great start.



HEALTH

CHECK-UPS

Your kitten needs good care now so he grows up to be a tough little tiger. Get him vaccinated as early as 6 weeks of age, then every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks of age. He can be neutered (and female kittens spayed). Ask your veterinarian when the time is appropriate. And even if he's an indoor cat, you'll still want to help protect him with flea/tick control and heartworm disease prevention.

INFECTION PROTECTION

Have your kitten checked for feline leukemia virus (FeLV). If other cats reside in your home, do this before he meets his new roomies. FeLV is highly recommended for all kittens. Remember, if your cat is exposed to another cat, he has the potential to catch FeLV.

FEEDING

Cats like to eat several small meals during the day, but be cautious about leaving food out constantly. You don't want your kitten to overeat and become obese. If you place food in a cube toy, he'll knock it around to get the kibble out, staying entertained and exercised at the same time!

LITTERBOX

As a general rule, have one litterbox for every cat in your home, plus one extra box. Place the boxes somewhere that's private, but that your cats can get to easily—and be sure they're cleaned often.

TRAINING

MEETINGS

If your new kitten will be joining other pets in your home, don't rush the introductions. If you've got a dog, set up a safety gate with enough room underneath for your kitten to "escape" and feel safe. Let current cats sniff the newcomer in a carrier, through a safety gate, or even underneath a closed door. Give your kitten a "safe place" like a spare bedroom for a few days until everyone becomes pals.

SCRATCHING

A natural behavior for cats, scratching helps your kitten exercise. It feels good, too! If you catch him shredding your couch or curtains, carry him to an appropriate scratching post. He'll catch on if you do it consistently.

GROOMING

Although he'll usually take care of himself, your cat will need help with some grooming. Get him used to being handled now, while he's young. Gently touch nail clippers to his claws, or a brush lightly along his back. Once he's used to the experience, you can gradually work up to clipping his nails.

SAFETY

KITTEN PROOFING

Kittens have tons of energy—and twice as much curiosity. Go through your home carefully to get rid of any toxic plants, bits of string, or forgotten rubber bands on the floors. It's also a good idea to fix any loose window screens.

ENTERTAINMENT

Give your kitten toys to play with and make sure they don't have pieces he could swallow. Although your kitten might think a piece of string is the perfect toy, you should skip it. If he ingests the string, it can be deadly. Consider a climbing structure or even a secured fish tank to entertain him.

CLAWS

With the right training and regular nail trimming, it's not usually necessary to have a cat declawed. Plus, if your kitten goes outdoors, he may need his claws to climb a tree to safety or defend himself.

OUTDOORS

If your kitten will be going outside, get him microchipped first so he'll be returned in case he gets lost. If he's got a collar, be sure it's the "snap-off" or "breakaway" kind. That way, if it gets snagged on a branch, it will break away and free him.

RESOURCES

WEBSITES

- *<http://indoorpet.osu.edu/> (Indoor Pet Initiative from The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine)
- *<http://www.catvets.com/cat-owners/disease-and-conditions> (American Association of Feline Practitioners)
- *http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/?credit=web_id251454357 (The Humane Society of The United States)
- *<http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control> (the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center)

BOOK

*It's a Cat's World . . . You Just Live in It: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Your Furry Feline by Dr. Justine A. Lee

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