



Your New Kitten Adoption Packet



Bringing Your Cat Home

Leaving the Shelter

Once you leave the shelter, keep your newly adopted cat in her carrier until you are inside of your home. When cats are nervous, they feel more secure in an enclosed space.

Your new cat has spent time in a small space in the shelter and may become scared or overwhelmed if released into a large, open space such as your house or apartment immediately. Therefore, it is best to keep her confined to one quiet room to start with. Your new cat's "sanctuary" room should include a bed, litter box, food and water, several hiding options and a scratching post. Cats will scratch to mark their territory in a new environment, so providing an appropriate outlet for scratching

THE FIRST FEW DAYS YOU WILL NEED:

- Cat Food
- Food and Water Dishes
- Litter box, Litter & Litter Scoop
- Break-away cat collar and ID tag
 - Scratching post
- Cat Bed or Soft Blanket
 - Cat toys

The Animal Outfitters at Animal Humane is a great place to find all the supplies you need at a great price. Counselors are available to answer any questions you may have on proper collar adjustment, litter and boxes, and types of toys that your new cat may enjoy.

from day one will help keep your cat from developing a preference for scratching drapes or furniture. Cats need to fully extend their backs when they scratch, so a scratching post should be at least 3-4 feet high. A tall post will also provide your cat with a high perch that many cats enjoy. Most cats appreciate having a horizontal surface to scratch also, like a cardboard scratching box. Plan to scoop your cat's litter box at least once daily. Many cats will find somewhere else to go if the box is dirty.

The first few days can be full of questions. This portion of the packet is designed to walk you through the first 48 hours with your new cat and address most of your concerns. Please feel free to call the **Behavior Helpline at 938-7900** for extra support.

Arriving Home

When you bring your cat home, carry her directly to her sanctuary room, close the door behind you and place her carrier on the floor with the gate open. Let her come out on her own, do not try to coax her or tip the crate to force her out. Cats are curious and most will soon come out to explore their surroundings. If your new cat is timid, she may not come out until night.

Leave fresh food and water out at all times, and check that it is being consumed. If your cat does not eat after the first 24 to 48 hours give your vet a call, as it may be a sign of illness, especially when combined with other symptoms. Cats need food with a high protein content, so feeding canned food is preferable, but some cats may be used to eating only dry kibble.

When your cat is ready to come out in your presence, stay back and let her come to you. Talk in a soft, reassuring tone, pet her if she seems interested, but do not try to pick her up.

Cat-Proof Your Home:

- Remove any poisonous houseplants
- Remove any objects that may be dangerous to a cat - unstable shelves, small objects or string-like items, dangling cords from blinds, etc
- Check all windows and screens to make sure they are very strong
- Lock away any household chemicals or cleaners



Write down any questions you have during this first 24-hour period. You should get a call from the adoption counselor who assisted you at Animal Humane in the next few days. You are always welcome to call Animal Humane's Adoptions Department any time you have a question.

Animal Humane's Behavior Helpline 938-7900

Give her time to learn that she can trust you. Leave the open carrier in the room for a few days, so that your cat has a safe retreat if she wants one. Allow your cat to explore her small new territory at her own pace and without the added stress of meeting other animals in the home. Introduce other family members slowly. Have them come into the room one at a time to pet and play with the cat. Have younger children sit down, then show them how to gently stroke the cat's fur and offer her a few treats. Help your children understand that they must respect the cat and refrain from bothering her while she eats, sleeps or uses the litter box.

Ready to Explore

Once your cat is comfortable in her sanctuary room, she may be ready to start exploring more of the house. Signs that she may be ready include scratching or meowing at the door and trying to run out when you open the door. Leave the door propped open to allow her to come out at her own speed and let her decide how long and how far she chooses to go. Let her get to know her environment with several short sessions outside of her sanctuary room each day. Keep the sanctuary room door open so she is able to retreat back to her safe place if needed, and keep her food, water and litter in the same location.

Your cat should wear a break-away collar and identification tag designed for cats. Even though you are keeping her indoors, she needs a safe form of identification in case she accidentally escapes. The collar should fit loosely enough to allow 2 fingers under it, but not be loose enough to come off over the cat's head. Break-away collars will come loose if they snag on a branch or other object.

If your cat is particularly shy, it may take her several days, or even weeks, to feel confident enough to explore the house. Continue to visit with her quietly, but do not force her to interact with people or other pets. Most cats will be ready to interact with you after a day or two for petting, play with toys, or cat treats, but not all will be willing to leave their sanctuary room in the first week, especially if you have other pets. Try to minimize the stress your new cat experiences during this first week. Avoid hosting gatherings or parties if possible, and don't invite friends to visit with their pets. Keeping the environment calm and predictable will help your new cat adjust to her surroundings, and also help her stay healthy. Please call Animal Humane's Behavior Helpline if you feel your cat is having difficulty adjusting to her new home.

Whether you plan on introducing your newly adopted cat to resident dogs, cats or both, the very first step is to create a “sanctuary” room for your new cat before you bring him home. Separating your new cat allows both the newcomer and the resident animals to get used to one another's scents and the idea of another pet well before their first face-to-face interaction.



Animal Humane's
Behavior Helpline
938-7900

Introductions



Some dogs become best friends with cats. Other dogs and cats co-exist but ignore each other. Some animals split the house, the cat living upstairs and the dog living downstairs (or the cat taking countertops, the dog taking the floor). Some dogs and cats will always have to be managed closely, and will not be able to share space safely.

Your new cat should have a “sanctuary” room equipped with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, access to natural sunlight, and hiding places for him to retreat if necessary. Large cardboard boxes with holes cut in two sides make great hiding places. The second hole allows the cat to escape if cornered, and will be important to keep around the house for the first few weeks after starting introductions. Keep in mind that cats like to hide in high places, so remove fragile items from shelves. When you bring your new cat home, place your cat immediately in his room and spend some quiet time with him there over the next week.

Do not introduce your new cat to your dogs or other cats right away, but take time to let them get accustomed to each other through scent-swapping. Switching out their bedding is a good way to familiarize them with each other's smell. You can also confine your new cat and let the other pet roam and then switch them so they can explore each other's scent. It is best not to allow them to meet face to face until your new cat has been in the house for one to two weeks. A good sign that pets are ready for introductions is if they express relaxed interest in each other underneath a closed door.

Meet the Dog

Even if your dog has cat experience and the cat has lived with a dog before, proceed cautiously during the first introduction.

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If you have more than one dog, introduce each dog separately to the cat. When you first allow your dog and your cat to meet face to face, keep your dog on a loose leash. Allow the dog to view the cat briefly, and then get the dog to focus on something else, like practicing commands. Praise your dog for being calm and relaxed and focusing on you while the cat is present. Never allow your dog to stare or fixate on the cat. Continue to give the dog short viewings of the cat throughout the day.

It's important to move at your smaller pet's pace and not force interaction. Have your dog lie down and stay and allow the cat to approach as he is comfortable. Use treats or praise to reward your dog for being calm and also reward your cat for exploring. As your pets become relaxed around each other, begin to let go of your dog's leash, but leave it on her to grab if necessary. Be prepared for full introductions to take weeks or even months.

Until you are 100 percent comfortable that your new dog poses no risk to the safety of your cat, never leave them alone unsupervised. Dogs can and do sometimes injure and kill cats. A pair or group of dogs is a greater risk, and must be watched carefully when around your cat. When you're out of the house, crate your dog or keep your cat in a separate room. When they begin sharing the same rooms, place furniture, cat trees and perches throughout the house so that your cat is able to move to a higher location to escape from your dog. It is also important to make sure that the cat's food and litter box are in areas inaccessible to your dog.

Meet the Cat

After a week or so of keeping your cats separated and scent-swapping, they should begin to exhibit active social impulses like batting their paws under the door. This is the time to begin allowing direct interaction. The best way to let cats meet for the first time is to leave the door to the new cat's room ajar, and let him come out at his own pace. Let the new cat explore and interact with the resident cat for a few minutes, then return the new cat to his room even if they interacted calmly. This time apart allows them both to regain their sense of territory and confidence, which encourages the next meeting. Continue this process daily, lengthening the time they are together a little each time.

Remember, an anxious cat is much more likely to behave aggressively than a cat who is comfortable and relaxed. Patience in the initial stages of the introduction process will increase your chances of a harmonious household.

If you notice that one or both cat are showing signs of stress (hiding, aggressive behavior, decreased appetite or excessive vocalization), separate them and give them more time before you try another introduction. If these signs persist for more than several days or if one cat stops eating, call Animal Humane's Behavior Helpline at this time for additional support.



Signs of a cat-friendly dog:

- Cautious investigations
- Respecting cat defensive signals like swatting

Call the Behavior Helpline if you see:

- Stiffening and staring
- Instant attempts to chase
- Straining at the leash,
- Whining and barking



The Litter Box

The Magic Number

The ideal number of litter boxes if you have multiple cats is one litter box more than you have cats living in your home. This is important so that a cat is never prevented from using the litter box because it's already occupied. These litter boxes should also be in several locations around the house, so that no one cat can prevent other cats from gaining access to them.

Pick of the Litter

Cats generally prefer fine-grained, unscented litter over other litter types. Buy high-quality litters and once you find a litter your cat likes, stick with it. Buying the least expensive litter or the brand that's on sale any given week could result in your cat not using the litter box. Litter box liners can catch on your cat's claws during cover-up and are not recommended.

Cats prefer large, open litter boxes. Steer clear of using covered litter boxes, since many cats find them too confining.

You newly adopted cat has been living in a small habitat in which he was able to find his litter box easily. When you first bring your cat home, confining him to one room that is set up with food, water and a litter box should quickly teach him the location of his litter box.

There's really no such thing as "litter-training" a cat in the same way one would houstrain a dog. A cat doesn't need to be taught what to do with a litter box because instinct will generally take over. The only thing you need to do is provide a litter box that is accessible and acceptable to your individual cat.

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they will have to clean it, but that's a mistake. Most cats won't use litter that's more than about two inches deep. In fact, some long-haired cats actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litter box.

Location, Location, Location

The litter box should be placed in an area where your cat will feel safe, not only while he is in the box but also when he is traveling to and from the box. Cats are prey animals and are most comfortable when they can see what may be approaching. Find a place that is somewhat protected yet still has a good visual field. Cats don't like to be disturbed while in the litter box, so keep the litter box away from high-traffic areas. However, closets and bathrooms are not ideal because you run the risk of your cat confronting a closed door when he needs to use the box.

Scoop your cat's litter box at least once daily.

If your cat finds his litter box offensive he will avoid it and find somewhere else to go.



Signs that your cat doesn't like his litter:

- not digging in the litter
- shaking his paws after leaving
- trying to eliminate while standing on the edge of the box
- running out of the litter box immediately after eliminating

Many people are inclined to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot to minimize odor and prevent cat litter from being tracked throughout the house. But if the litter box ends up in a location a person would avoid, like a basement with a cold, cement floor—your cat may avoid it too. Keep the route to and from your cat's litter box free of distractions such as a dog crate or another cat's favorite napping spot. If your home has multiple stories make sure to place at least one litter box on each level of your home.

Remember to place your cat's water and food dishes in a separate area from the litter box.

A Clean Slate

Cats are known to be finicky about many things, and having a clean litter box is at the top of that list. To meet the discriminating needs of your cat, the litter box should be scooped at least once daily. Empty the litter completely and clean and refill the box at least once a month for one cat and more often for multiple cats.

Avoid using strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box, as doing so may cause your cat to avoid the box. Also, some cleaning solutions are toxic to cats. Scrub the box out with soap and hot water once a month before putting in fresh litter.

If Problems Develop

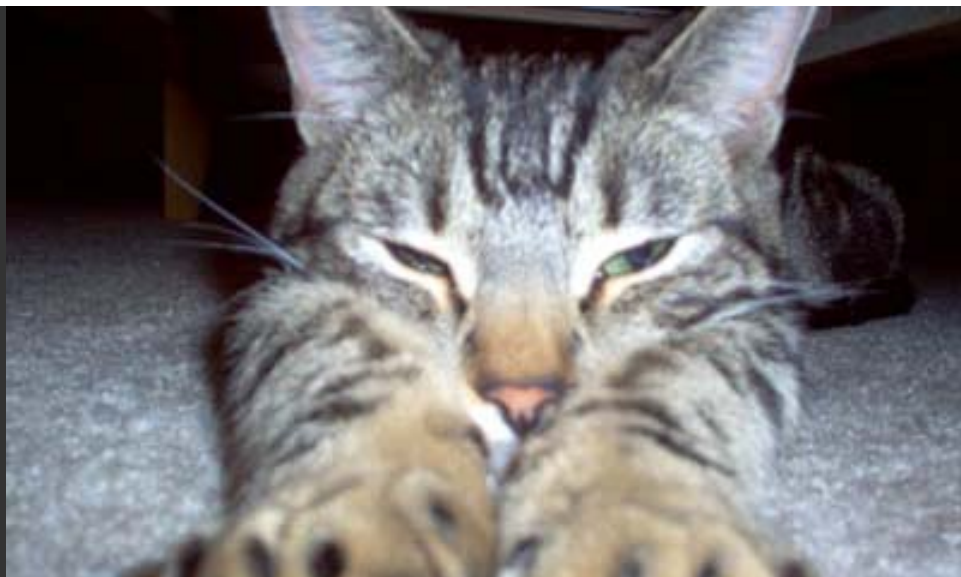
If you have not discovered anything in your cat's litter box after the first few days, your cat either has a serious medical problem or he is going somewhere else. Once you discover his alternate toilet, thoroughly clean the area using an enzyme-based cleaner such as Nature's Miracle™. This type of cleaner is designed to get rid of the odor-causing bacteria, and will help prevent your cat from visiting the same spot again.

If you catch your cat in the act of eliminating outside the box, never punish him by yelling, hitting, or rubbing his nose in it. Punishment will only cause stress, and may cause your cat's avoidance of the litter box to worsen. Your cat wants to use his litter box, but he may dislike either the location of the litter box or of the kind of litter you are using. Call Animal Humane's Behavior Helpline for suggestions on how to make the litter box more acceptable to your cat.

If your cat successfully uses the litter box in your home but begins to eliminate in areas other than the box at a later date, your first call should always be to your veterinarian. A change in litter box habits can be an early sign of an underlying medical condition.

Along with a litter box, one of the first purchases you make for your new cat should be a scratching post and a scratch pad.

Scratching is an innate behavior that serves your cat's instinctive needs by providing her the opportunity to stretch, mark territory, and shed dead layers of nail. **It is a normal part of your cat's behavior.**



Behavior Helpline
938-7900

Scratching



Provide Appropriate Scratching Surfaces

Cats can be trained to use a scratching post instead of other surfaces in your home. The post must be tall enough for your cat to reach up and get a full stretch, and be held firmly in place by a heavy base with no risk of tipping over. You may find that it helps to have a scratching post in each room that your cat visits, and as many scratching posts as you have cats. Cats need access to horizontal scratching surfaces in addition to vertical posts. Scratch pads, boxes filled with layered strips of corrugated cardboard, provide a desirable option for your cat to scratch and knead on a flat surface.

Trim your new cat's nails on a regular basis to minimize the negative effects of scratching. Your veterinarian can demonstrate the proper way to trim nails.

Declaw surgery is physically and emotionally traumatizing for a cat. Cats may develop other behavior problems as a result of the surgery.

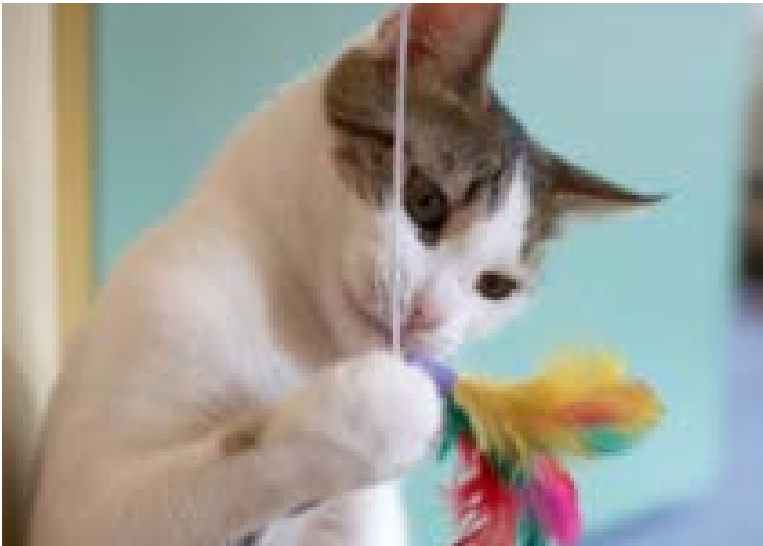
A humane alternative is to teach your cat to use a scratching post and trim her nails regularly, or ask about SoftPaws™, a practical non-surgical alternative to declawing.

Introducing Your Cat To the Scratching Post

The location of the scratching post is crucial. If it's not where your kitty wants to scratch, she won't use it. Cats will scratch to create a visual territory marker. If your post is hidden behind a couch or in an unused room, your cat isn't likely to use it. The best placement for a scratching post is near your cat's sleeping or eating area. You can entice your cat to use the scratching post by sprinkling catnip on it, playing with her near the post using fishing pole toys, and placing treats on or around the post.

Discouraging Inappropriate Scratching

If you are trying to discourage your cat from scratching on a particular piece of furniture, try placing her scratching post in front of the furniture, and gradually move the post a few inches a day as the cat begins to use it regularly. Praise your cat when you see her using the scratching post and spend a minute playing at the post with her. Cover furniture you want to discourage your cat from scratching with a tightly tucked sheet and place Sticky Paws™ or double-sided tape on the areas your cat seems most interested in. The cover and tape can be removed once your cat is in the habit of scratching her post. Squirting your cat with water to correct her is not very effective because it only works when you are present. Your cat may still scratch in the wrong place when you are not around.



Make Time for Play

Interactive Toys

Wands with feathers, bells or shiny materials are irresistible to most cats. Cats enjoy playing games that simulate hunting: hiding, pouncing, batting, and biting, so make sure to keep play directed toward toys rather than your hands or clothing. Many cats also enjoy chasing objects that roll or skitter erratically, and some will even “fetch”. Regular play sessions with your cat will keep her fit and also strengthen the bond between you and your cat.

Grooming

Grooming is a more relaxing way for you and your cat to bond. Start with short sessions and slowly increase the length of time you hold and brush your cat to help her learn to enjoy the sensation of brushing if she does not already.

Fun toys for cats:

- Cat Dancer™ springy wire toy with rolled cardboard tips
 - Feather or fabric strip wands
- Mylar pompom balls for cats that like to “fetch”
 - Catnip infused stuffed mice
- Paper shopping bags with handles removed – cats love them!

Brushing is beneficial for all cats, and your medium or longhaired cat may need your help to comb out tangled fur and carefully clip away mats from behind her ears and legs. All cats will benefit if you regularly clean their eyes, ears, and teeth and trim their nails on a regular basis. Have a professional groomer or your veterinarian instruct you in the proper methods.

Always give praise and a treat at the end of your grooming sessions so your cat looks forward to spending this time with you.

Click your cat for tricks!

Clicker training involves using a fingertip sized metal clicker to produce a clicking noise and always following this noise immediately with your cat’s favorite treat. Once your cat associates the sound of the click with delicious treats she will try her best to do something that will be worthy of producing a click.

Teaching an old cat new tricks – or any tricks at all!

Many people are surprised to hear that you can teach your cat some basic behaviors through positive reinforcement methods. When your cat offers a behavior you like—sitting on a chair instead of up on the counter, or coming when you call her— you can reward her with a treat or with a short play session.

You can also teach your cat a variety of tricks through positive reinforcement (with or without a clicker) including sit, stay, speak, roll over, shake, come, and touching a target object with her nose or paw. You can even train your cat to walk in a harness – just make sure you use one that is designed for cats and fits correctly. Cats respond well to consistent, positive training, but they won’t tolerate corrections or excessive repetition. Daily training sessions should last only about 5 or 10 minutes and end with playtime to keep your cat coming back for more!

You probably imagined what your dream cat would act like, and maybe you are disappointed because your new cat doesn't quite fit that description. Your adopted cat **CAN** fulfill your expectations, but it may require some patience and understanding on your part.

Cats can take a long time to adjust to changes in their environment. Some cats will adjust in a few days, while others may take weeks or months. Enjoy getting to know your new cat's distinct personality during this time.



Animal Humane's
Behavior Helpline
938-7900

The Adjustment Period



Animal Humane's Behavior Exchange Policy allows you to bring your adopted cat back to the shelter within the first 30 days for an exchange for another pet. In order to return your adopted cat, you must call Animal Humane's Behavior Department at 938-7900 to make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance.

Settling In

It is impossible to give an estimate of the length of time it will take before your cat is fully settled in his new home. Some cats are by nature more bold and adventurous than others. Even if your cat seems comfortable and settled, he may still be easily frightened by changes such as new people visiting and need to retreat. Keep your cat's sanctuary room set up, as this feeling of familiarity is very important to cats. You may also choose to continue confining your new cat to his sanctuary room at night and when you are out, especially if you have other pets.

If your new cat is venturing out of his sanctuary room, make sure to provide toys and acceptable scratching surfaces in other areas of the house. If you want to move your cat's food, water, and litter box out of the sanctuary room eventually, set up an additional litter box and food and water station now in the locations where you will be keeping them. This will help your cat learn the new locations while he still has the security of eating and using the box in his sanctuary room if he wishes. Remember to scoop each litter box at least once a day.

Be very careful to avoid accidentally letting your cat outdoors during this adjustment period. If your cat escapes you may not be able to find him, and he will not be familiar enough with his new home to find his way back if he gets disoriented. Be vigilant about opening and closing outside doors quickly, and teach your children to do the same.

Children and Cats

Everyone in the family will be excited about your new pet. Keep your children quiet when visiting with the cat, especially if he's not used to kids. If your cat is friendly and approaches, have children offer an outstretched hand to sniff. If the cat seems comfortable with this, they can gently pet him. As the cat becomes familiar with your children, they can try engaging him with an interactive toy. Do not let your children encourage a cat or kitten to pounce on or play with their hands or feet – keep play directed toward toys to prevent accidental play bites or scratches.

Teach your children how to properly hold a cat: with one hand under his hind end and one hand supporting his back, leaning against their bodies. And don't leave small children unsupervised with your new cat.

Spending Quality Time With Your Cat

Cats are individuals and enjoy different types of interaction. If your cat does not enjoy being held try brushing him or playing with him. Being picked up can be very intimidating for cats, and many who are friendly and enjoy petting still object to being lifted. To help your cat get used to being held, place a chair in the room and try sitting and inviting him onto your lap instead of picking him up. You can also try sitting on a bed and letting your cat wander over into your lap, or sitting on the floor on his level.

Playtime is fun for cats and their owners, and it's a great way to ensure that your indoor cat gets enough exercise! Interactive toys such as feather wands are a great way to bond with your cat. Most cats enjoy chasing toys that roll, and some will even "fetch". Toys with catnip are acceptable and many cats love them. Do not leave toys out that your cat could choke on or swallow - this includes any string toys, or toys with small parts. Never let your cat play with items smaller than a ping-pong ball.

Cats are very much creatures of habit. They like things to be predictable from day to day. Even the most easy-going cat will need time to adjust to the change in routine from being in the shelter to living in a home. Once your cat is relaxed and confident in his new home, you will notice that he will start paying more attention to you! For a long time, his new surroundings might overwhelm him and you may feel ignored or feel that you are not connecting. Do not take this personally. Try to be understanding of how your pet must feel. The more quality time you spend with your new cat during this adjustment period, the stronger your relationship will become.



Bringing Home a Shy Cat

- Be patient. The best way to win his trust is not to rush him.
- Let him explore his immediate surroundings, waiting for him to come to you when he is ready.
- Get on his level and offer treats or toys.

In the early days with your shy cat, don't become frustrated. Never rush your cat. Create positive associations, and you will start to see results. In the hands of a patient and caring owner, a shy cat can be a great companion and will make gains in confidence over time.



Your Indoor Cat

Climbing and Perching

Cats like changing scenery, especially if they are provided a safe place to watch the world go by. Cat perches can act as indoor "trees" and are an excellent way to allow your cat to climb. You can mount shelves on the wall that your cat can hop up on, or make or purchase a cat tree – a structure that she can climb and scratch. A great place for a cat perch is by a window so that your cat can watch birds outdoors. A cat tree that extends at least five feet high gives her an opportunity to climb and safely explore a high space. Placing furniture your cat is allowed to climb near the windows in your home also can expand your cat's horizons.

Cats need opportunities to express their natural behaviors, and your indoor cat needs some help from you to satisfy her social and predatory drives

How safe would you feel in an environment where you were continually at risk of getting hit by a car, getting in a fight, catching a deadly infection, or being kidnapped, hunted or shot? That is the reality of being an outdoor cat.

Allowing your cat to roam at will is not the solution for providing your cat a fulfilled life. Your indoor cat can have the best of both worlds if you make an effort to enrich her daily life by simulating some of the activities cats enjoy outdoors without risking her health or happiness.

A birdbath or bird feeder within sight of the window can increase your cat's enjoyment. Watch out for roaming cats in your yard, though, since the sight of those other cats can trigger stress and possibly urine marking in the indoor cat.

Hiding

Some cats prefer to watch the activity around them from a quiet, safe place. It is especially important to provide hiding places for anxious cats and when there is more than one cat in the house. You can make a hiding place for your cat by cutting a hole in a cardboard box just big enough for her to get in and out. Put a shirt with your scent on it in the box and place it in the highest accessible place in the house. Experiment with different size boxes in different places. If your cat enjoys exploring paper bags when you get home from the store make sure to remove the handles first. Plastic bags are not safe for cats to play with.

Create Safe Outdoor Time With These Tips:

- Screened in porches or window enclosures allow cats to sniff fresh air and bask in the sun.
 - Build an outdoor enclosure or cattery for your cat or look into "cat fencing" products.
- Some cats can be trained to accept a harness so that they can be walked.



Keeping your cat indoors will increase your cat's lifespan

Chasing and Jumping

Small, fast-moving objects will activate a cat's drive to chase small prey. Anything tied to the end of a string will provide this quick, erratic movement. Furry, feathery or flapping things are particularly attractive to cats. Patches of bright light, such as the reflection from a watch face or mirror, often get cats chasing. Some cats, particularly the younger ones, will jump and strike at soap bubbles, which should be made from non-toxic soap. Don't forget that many of these toys are only safe if used with supervision and should be put out of your cat's reach when you are not around.

Self-play toys are especially good for cats that are left home alone often. Food dispensing toys such as puzzle feeders can be purchased or you can get creative and make your own using clean yogurt containers with plastic lids or toilet paper rolls. Other self-play toys that cats may find irresistible are balls on springs or a wall- or door-mounted Cat Dancer™ (rolled cardboard paper pieces on a spring coil wire).

Feeding

Meal times become more interesting when your cat has to search for food. If you feed dry food, you can place it in small clumps on the floor progressively farther away from the bowl each day. The clumps can eventually be scattered throughout the house in different places each day so that your cat has to search them out.

Catnip, catmint and cat grasses can be successfully grown indoors in pots from seeds or small plants that are commercially available. Catmint and cat grasses are attractive to many cats and redirect chewing that might otherwise be directed at some of your indoor plants. This gives your cat fresh vegetation to eat, which she would otherwise do outdoors.

Catnip is a safe plant that has certain effects on your cat, none of them long-term or harmful. It might make your cat more active, and may cause her to jump or roll, rub up against things and sniff or lick the catnip. Many cats will visit a catnip plant each day to sniff, rub, grasp, roll alongside and kick at it. After the initial burst of increased activity, the cat enters a relaxed and euphoric state. Catnip should only be given to adult cats (it has no effect on kittens nine months and younger) and should be given as an occasional— not an everyday— treat.

Kittens are some of the most adorable creatures around. But owning a kitten comes with its share of responsibilities and frustrations as well. Young kittens have boundless energy, and they are always in the mood to play, day or night. They also need supervision to stay safe and out of trouble.



Animal Humane's
Behavior Helpline
938-7900

Kittens



Socializing your kitten is important to help her grow up into a safe and friendly adult cat.

If you don't play with your kitten, pet her, talk to her, and include her in your daily activities when she is young you will end up with a solitary cat who prefers spend time away from the family.

Getting Your Home Ready

Kittens will play with anything they can get their paws on, so it's important to stay one step ahead of them. Your kitten will be very curious, and can get lost if left unsupervised. For the first few weeks you should create a small, safe area where she can feel secure and can be left when you have to leave the house or go to bed.

To avoid injury, your kitten will need to be watched carefully and your house will need to be kitten-proofed. Fragile items, curtains, and furniture should be protected as they can be destroyed by a boisterous kitten at play. Kittens will play with anything small, so remove objects from the floor that could pose a choking hazard. Leave food and water out at all times as kittens should be able to eat four or more times a day when they are growing.

Kittens and Other Pets

Keep the kitten in a separate room with her own toys, water, food and litter box, and swap scents with your resident cats by switching out bedding between the kitten and the adult cats (See "Introductions"). If you already have multiple cats, introduce the adult resident cats one at a time to the newly adopted kitten. Give the older cats a way to retreat if the kitten is too annoying or playful.

If you are introducing a kitten to more than one dog, again, introduce only one dog at a time. Small kittens may not have any fear of dogs, so you must watch the dog carefully.

If your dog is young and high energy, he could hurt or kill the kitten simply by trying to play. Even if your dog is okay with your adult cats, he may become too rough with a kitten and hurt her. Because kittens are small and want to run and play, dogs with a strong prey drive may be very excited by a kitten's movements. For safety's sake, keep small kittens and dogs physically separated whenever you are not directly supervising them.

Socialization

If you expose your kitten to anything and everything she may come into contact with as an adult, you will have much less chance of ending up with a fearful cat. Introduce her to different ages, sizes and genders of people, other animals, and different environments outside of your home. Associate these new experiences with things your cat likes, such as affection or treats.

Kittens that have been handled early and often will be more friendly and willing to accept new people when they are older. Begin working with your kitten on accepting handling from day one so that veterinary exams or visits to a boarding facility will go more smoothly. Practice nail clipping, handling her feet, administering medication and looking at her teeth. Get your kitten comfortable with entering her cat carrier and riding in the car. Reward your kitten during these new experiences with treats or praise.

Managing your Kitten's Rough Play

Teaching your kitten proper play skills and playing with her every day will improve her coordination, teach her social skills, and also give her appropriate outlets for her energy. Teach your kitten to play nicely with people from the beginning by instructing the whole family and visitors to play with your kitten gently. Do not allow her to bite or scratch hands or feet. If your kitten plays with your hands, have your hand go limp and say "Ouch!" in a loud voice. Then drag a toy along the floor to encourage your kitten to pounce on it, or throw a toy away from your kitten to give her even more exercise chasing the toy down. It is also good to have some toys your kitten can wrestle with, like a soft stuffed toy that's about the size of your kitten, so she can grab and bite it. This simulates how kittens play with each other and provides your kitten with another natural form of exercise. It is good to provide toys for your kitten that encourage the use of multiple senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch). Since kittens need a lot of playtime, try to set up three or four consistent times during the day to initiate play with your kitten. If you play with your kitten regularly, you can engage her in fun before she decides to pounce on you!

Communicate to your kitten what she should be doing rather than focusing on correcting bad behavior. Draw her attention away from the undesired behavior, and as soon as you have her attention, offer her an appropriate toy or object. When she starts to play nicely or scratch on the appropriate surface, make sure to praise her.



There are several steps you can take to decrease the likelihood that your cute kitten will turn into an adult cat with behavior problems:

- Clean your kitten's litter box at least once a day
 - Encourage your kitten to scratch in appropriate places
- Redirect your kitten's rough play to appropriate toys
- Handle your kitten daily
- Consistently enforce rules such as not jumping on counters
- Teach your kitten a few basic commands
- Expose your kitten to a lot of different experiences