

Your New Kitten Checklist

Congratulations! You've added a new kitten/s to the family. This is a fun and exciting time as you get to know this adorable little newcomer/s. This is also a time when a great amount of learning takes place and your kitten needs you to be prepared so you can start her/them off on the right foot. To make things easier, efficient and safe for everyone concerned, here is a list of some general essentials to guide you in the right direction. If this is your first experience with a cat though, take the time to read a good book on kitten and cat care because there are so many details that can't be included in a brief article. Being prepared on how to safeguard your kitten, bond, train and provide proper veterinary and nutritional care will help ensure your newest furry family member has a long and healthy life. It's also



important to know how cats communicate and show affection. For many first-time cat parents, they make the mistake of comparing cats to dogs and that's a losing situation for everyone. Cats aren't little dogs. There are also many training mistakes that are easy to make as you guide your little kitten through life. You can find step-by-step training techniques as well as all the other information you'll need on raising your kitten in the book, [Think Like a Cat: how to raise a well-adjust cat and not a sour puss](#). This article will give you an introduction to the basic essentials your new kitten will need, so here we go:

Basic Equipment

- Good quality kitten food
- Fresh water
- A "sanctuary" room where he can be initially confined
- Uncovered litter box (low sides for easy entry)
- Scoopable, unscented litter
- Litter scoop
- Food bowl (a size that's easy for a kitten)
- Water bowl (separate from the food bowl)
- Scratching post (sisal covered)
- Soft grooming brush
- Nail trimmers
- Safe toys for solo play
- Interactive play toys (fishing pole design)
- Cozy bed
- Hiding places (box on its side, cat tunnel, etc)
- Cat carrier
- Cat tree (for climbing)
- Identification (microchip, ID tag, breakaway collar)
- Treats for training (or you can use the kitten's food)
- Clicker (optional training tool)

Two Kittens are Better than One!

Consider Adopting a Pair! Here's Why...



Many people are under the false impression that cats are solitary and don't want feline companionship. The truth is that cats are social animals and they thrive when they are blessed with feline friendship, especially if they grow up in a pair! There is a lifelong magical sweetness in the love of two sibling kitties! Not only is it good for kitties to grow up together but it is bad for them to be alone. Isolating a kitten can delay the kitten's development emotionally, socially, and sometimes even physically. The companionship two kittens provide each other can help prevent future behavior problems from boredom or separation anxiety. Just like a human child, a kitten suffers if left all alone when you are out. Two kittens who have one another will play, groom and cuddle. Togetherness creates security and comfort for while you're gone. They will be just as happy to see you when you return, but they will not have suffered in your absence and they will ultimately develop into more well-adjusted and happier kitties!

If you already have an adult cat, it's still ideal to adopt a pair of kittens because a pair of kittens actually makes for better companionship for the adult. This is because kittens have boundless energy. They want to play and run constantly which can overwhelm and irritate an older cat, but if there are two kittens, they will focus more of their play energy on one another and the older cat can choose to join their play when he feels like it. This allows the older cat to more comfortably move into a healthy relationship with the new family members at his own pace.

A single kitten is likely to keep people awake at night with constant jumping, pouncing and other normal kitten behaviors. With a companion to play with at night, this behavior is minimized because they will have each other to play with until they too fall asleep.

Adopting a pair of kittens does not add much cost or work because the kittens will share the same space and most of the same supplies. Your effort to kitten-proof the house and set up for the pair will be the same as it would be for one - and you will get twice the love and twice the cuddles, while your kittens will get the lifelong joy of a best buddy, playmate and snuggle-mate! The bottom line is that when you adopt two kittens of the same approximate age, you are almost certainly assured of them sharing a happy loving bond that will create comfort and joy for the kittens for the rest of their lives and bring extra amounts of love and happiness into your home!



Kitten-Proofing and Safety Tips!

Your kitten will most likely view everything in the house as a potential toy. She'll also have a strong desire to be vertical so your curtains and bookshelves are potential jungle gyms. Kittens often get themselves into trouble by squeezing into the most unlikely places so take the time to go room by room to kitten-proof. There are things in almost every room that you wouldn't think could be harmful so it's important to look at each room from a kitten's point of view. For example **a recliner can be deadly to kittens!** It can be easy for the kitten to hide underneath and get up inside and get injured or even killed when you tilt a reclining chair or put it back in the upright position.



Clothing Washers and Dryers may seem out of reach but kittens



easily find their way inside.

One way is that a kitten can

crawl into a pile of dirty laundry and hide there. You may unknowingly scoop up the laundry and toss it in the washer. Always put each piece of laundry into the washer separately. Also, check the washer and dryer before you turn them on and then again after you empty the laundry before you close the doors again. Tragically, many kittens and even adult cats are killed in washers and dryers.

Another danger due to a misconception many new cat parents have, has to do with a simple ball of yarn. You may have seen lots of pictures of kittens and cats playing with balls of yarn and that might appear to be a convenient and fun toy for a curious kitty but it's actually potentially deadly. All cats have backward-facing barbs on their tongues that are used in the wild to rasp meat from the bones of prey. The barbs also trap dirt, hair and parasites as cats groom themselves. These barbs are what give your kitten's tongue that scratchy feeling when she licks you. Because of the way the barbs face,



anything that gets attached to the tongue must get

swallowed. The cat can't spit out a piece of yarn or string. Swallowing these types of items can lead to choking and can also cause potentially deadly intestinal blockages. They can either get stuck or they can wrap around the intestines. Don't leave string, yarn, thread or rubber bands around where your kitten can get them. Also, if you see thread hanging from the back end of your kitten, don't pull because there may be a needle attached. Take your kitten to the veterinary clinic immediately.



Kitten Safety Checklist!

Kittens are playful and curious so it's crucial that you go through your home room by room and make sure you've kitten-proofed. Here are just some examples of what needs to be done:

- Secure window screens
- Keep all medicine away. Even aspirin or Tylenol can be deadly.
- Don't leave out string, ribbon, rubber bands, pins, tacks or any other small items that things that can be swallowed.
- Keep household cleansers put away in cabinets
- Use trash cans with lids or secure them in cabinets
- Cut handles off paper bags before offering as a toy
- Don't let your kitten play with plastic bags
- Look for holes in the walls around bathroom or kitchen pipes
- Cover small openings where a kitten could wedge herself and get stuck
- Keep kittens away from recliners as they can be crushed if they get underneath or up inside
- Look for hidden holes in or under cupboards where kittens can get into walls or under house
- Secure electrical cords so they don't dangle
- Coat any dangling electrical cords with a bitter anti-chew product
- Use museum or earthquake wax to secure breakable objects that can't be put away
- ALWAYS Check the washer and dryer before doing laundry
- Always double-check when closing closets and drawers
- Keep all household plants out of kitten's reach (most are poisonous to cats)
- Close all sewing and knitting baskets after use and double-check for any pins on the carpet
- Don't leave candles burning where a kitten could reach them
- Make sure fireplace has a secure screen
- Don't throw boxes out without first checking if the kitten is hiding there
- Do a "kitten check" before leaving the house in case she's locked in a closet or drawer
- Block the space behind the refrigerator so the kitten can't get wedged in there



The above list is just a small sample of the types of kitten-proofing that may need to be done. You'll have to customize it based on your specific household. Kitten-proofing may seem like lots of work but keep in mind that your kitten will mature and outgrow many of the dangerous behaviors. If you have children you know that baby-proofing and toddler-proofing your home is needed but doesn't last forever. And speaking of baby-proofing, you can find many items to help you kitten-proof in the baby safety section of department stores and baby product stores. Electrical cord covers, outlet covers, cabinet locks, toilet paper roll covers, etc., are also very useful when trying to safeguard a curious little kitten.

First Stop: The Veterinary Clinic

Your kitten will need lifelong veterinary care and the time to start is right now. Depending upon where you got your kitten and her current age, she may need to begin or continue her initial kitten vaccinations and deworming. Even if she has had her vaccinations before you got her, an initial visit to the veterinarian for a checkup is important before bringing her home, especially if you have other pets at home already. Your veterinarian can also give you guidance on nutrition, show you how to do things such as nail trimming and can provide answers to your questions about being a first-time cat parent. It's also important to establish a client/veterinarian relationship now, while your new family member is just starting out.

A Safe Place to Land



Even though you're probably so excited to begin your life with the new kitten, keep in mind that your home environment is unfamiliar and big. That's a lot for a little kitten to adjust to initially so it's best to confine her to one room. I have always referred to this as the "sanctuary" room. It can be an extra bedroom or any room you can close off. This way the kitten can get her bearings without being overwhelmed.

Your kitten is also just in the learning stages of activities such as using the litter box, scratching, climbing, exploring, etc. It's much easier for her to have everything conveniently

located right now. Depending upon how young your kitten is, it's crucial to have her litter box very close by. Equip the sanctuary room with your kitten's litter box, a vertical scratching post, a [horizontal scratching](#) pad, a few hiding places (paper bags or boxes on their sides), a cozy napping area, food and water (place these far from the litter box). Your kitten will also need toys. Leave out some safe toys for solo playtime. For interactive playtime you will bring in toys so they can be used with your supervision. You don't want to leave any toys out that have strings or anything that could pose a danger to your kitten.

Leave the carrier in the sanctuary room for your cat to use as a hiding place if she wants. Line the carrier with a towel and your kitten will have a safe place if she wants to curl up in there. Start introducing your family members to the kitten while she's in the sanctuary room but do it in a way that doesn't overwhelm her. When you aren't there to supervise the kitten, keep her in the sanctuary room until she's old enough and confident enough to have the run of the house. The amount of time your new kitten will have to be in the sanctuary room depends on her age, personality, and whether you currently have other pets at home. If she's the only pet and she seems comfortable and confident after about 24 hours or so, you can begin to let her explore the house a little at a time. Always make sure she knows where her litter box is and can return to the safety of the sanctuary room. If you have other pets at home then you'll have to keep the kitten in the sanctuary room as you do a gradual, positive introduction. If she's a very young kitten, keep her confined to a smaller area until she gets more comfortable navigating around and knows where her litter box is and won't get lost or disoriented in the house.

The Cat Carrier



Even after your kitten is out of her sanctuary room, keep the cat carrier set up and ready all the time. This will help your kitten become comfortable with its presence and you'll eventually be able to do some carrier training to help desensitize your kitten to the experience of being in a carrier and also travel itself. It's never too early to start training her to accept being in a carrier. You can do this by placing treats nearby and also inside the carrier. You can even offer some of her meals in there. While it may be easy to get a kitten in a carrier now, it will be much more difficult to wrestle a full-grown cat in there if she really doesn't want to go. Training early will save you and your cat lots of stress later.

Getting to Know You

The time that your kitten is in the sanctuary room is the time to begin the bonding process. You can bring in an interactive toy (fishing pole design) to initiate what will hopefully become a lifelong routine for both of you – daily play sessions together. Kittens have lots of energy and they need to be able to learn about their emerging skills so they need to play, climb and jump. If you have a frightened kitten then the fishing pole design of the toy will help create trust because it puts you at enough of a distance so she can relax and enjoy the game. Bring other family members into the sanctuary room to get to know the kitten. If she's timid, do it one person at a time. And most of all, be patient. With time and TLC she will gradually become more and more confident.



The Litter Box



Since your kitten is still in the early learning stages, the litter box set-up needs to be conveniently located and easy to navigate. The box should be low-sided or at least have one low cut-out so the kitten can easily get in and out. As your kitten grows you'll be able to change out the box for a larger one but for right now, make sure it's low enough while she's young and is working on developing her physical and mental abilities. Keep in mind that your kitten may not be able to remember where the box is located or have the bladder control to get to it in time so don't let her have the run of the entire house until you feel she has the routine down. Also, get on a schedule of bringing your kitten to the litter box during the times elimination might normally occur such as after a nap, after a meal and after playtime.

Food and Water

Start with getting the right food and water bowls. Your kitten needs her own bowl that's a good size for her. If you have a multicat household it's a good idea to make sure all cats have their own bowls. With your kitten, she'll need to eat a growth formula food and shouldn't be eating another resident cat's adult formula. You also don't want any adult cats eating growth formula. Kittens need to be fed several meals a day and your veterinarian can advise you how often and how much to feed based on your kitten's age and specific health.

Your kitten needs fresh water available at all

times! Don't put the water bowl right next to the food and don't use a double feeder for food and water.

Many cats don't like the food and water close together. If you have larger pets at home already, don't just put out one giant water bowl. Your kitten needs a water bowl that's the appropriate size for her. You may have assumed your kitten needs or wants milk but she shouldn't have any. You should give young kittens formula designed for kittens. Also, once weaned, cats become lactose intolerant so offering milk can lead to diarrhea. You can find lactose free milk at the pet store or supermarket. Diarrhea can lead to dehydration, which in a kitten, can become deadly. If you have an orphaned kitten who isn't on solid food yet, your veterinarian will recommend a milk replacement formula and that formula isn't from cow's milk. Additionally, milk should never be given to a kitten as a replacement for water because it can lead to dehydration. So unless your veterinarian instructs you that your kitten needs replacement formula, you should be feeding kitten formula food and offering fresh, clean water.



The Scratching Post

Get your kitten started off right by providing an appropriate scratching post. Keep in mind that your kitten's claws are probably all the time right now but as she matures she'll become better at keeping them retracted. Texture matters when it comes to a scratching post. Choose a sisal covered one that's tall and sturdy. Stay away from carpet-covered posts as they are ineffective. Place the post in a convenient location where your kitten will probably feel the urge to scratch – such as near the food bowl or by her favorite napping location. You can even get some corrugated scratching pads (they're very inexpensive) and place them around for your kitten. If you're considering having your kitten declawed, keep in mind that cats can easily be trained to scratch on posts and not on the furniture. There's no reason to put your kitten through such an inhumane procedure. Cats can easily be trained not to scratch furniture. Please take the time to read up on kitten training before making a cruel decision to declaw that would adversely affect your kitten for the rest of her life.





Cat Trees

Your kitten loves to climb and it's actually providing important skill-building for her. She's learning about her strength, balance and speed. Provide those opportunities for her by having a sturdy cat tree available. This way she can climb there instead of scaling your curtains or bookshelves. As your kitten matures, she'll appreciate having the cat tree as vertical territory. Cats love being in elevated locations. It will make a huge difference in her life to have a tree she can call her own!



Grooming and Nail Trimming

Unless you want to end up doing battle with an adult cat who won't let you near her claws or will bite you whenever she sees a brush, get started now on the training. While your kitten is still young is the time to get her acclimated. Get a soft brush and start brushing her for a few minutes several times a day. Gently handle her ears and touch her mouth as well. Get her comfortable with being touched so she'll accept it later when you start cleaning her teeth, cleaning her ears or if she needs to be medicated. Claw trimming on a regular basis is a necessity. You'll just want to trim the very sharp tip off the top of the nail. If you start the process when your kitten is young and are consistent about doing it, she'll probably accept the process without complaint (or with minimal complaining) once she's mature. You'll probably need a hands-on lesson from your veterinarian the first time so you can learn the best method to do it and also so you can be shown how to avoid cutting too much of the nail. There's a blood supply that runs through the nail and you certainly don't want to cut the nail at that point because it's very painful for the cat, will cause lots of bleeding and can lead to an infection. Ask your veterinarian or veterinary technician to give you a quick lesson in claw trimming.



Environmental Enrichment, Playtime and Socialization

The indoor environment is the safest place for your kitten but you want to make sure that environment is filled with stimulation, fun and also security and comfort. Instead of leaving toys piled up in a box in the corner, locate them through your kitten's area for her to discover. Create vertical territory through cat trees and safe cat shelving. Engage in several interactive play sessions per day and also socialize your kitten to people, sounds and experiences. Socialization now is important because it will help your kitten handle changes, and the appearances of unfamiliar people as she grows. Acclimate your cat to the carrier and take her for car rides. Have friends over and show them how to gently handle her so the kitten becomes comfortable with being held and also develops a good comfort level with people in her environment.

Finally... More IMPORTANT Health and Safety Basics!

Monitoring your kitten's health is extremely important - sick kittens must be treated quickly. Keep tabs on the following:

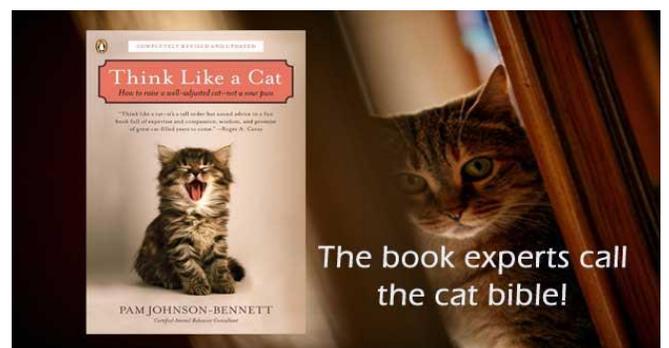
- **Do NOT wear shoes around kittens!** Be especially careful when walking around. They move quickly and it's all too easy to step on them.
- Diarrhea and upper respiratory infection (watery eyes, stuffy nose, sneezing - similar to a human cold) are serious and should be immediately treated by a veterinarian. **A kitten can die within a day from vomiting and/or Diarrhea!**
- Keeping the kittens clean helps to maintain their health. Wash bedding regularly and food and water dishes daily.
- If kittens get dirty from food or potty, gently clean them with warm, damp towels and gently dry them.
- Make sure kittens don't get too cold or too hot. On hot summer days, use the AC.
- Strain and clean litterboxes regularly



- Never give cow's milk to kittens. Since they cannot digest it properly, it can make them sick. Only give formula made for kittens.
- For the first approx. 10 days of bringing a new kitten into your home, wash your hands before handling other pets in the home, until you are sure the kittens show no signs of illness or diarrhea. Littermates can be together from the start because they have been exposed to the same things.
- Read up on cat behavior and humane kind methods of effective training. It's never too soon to help your kitten begin to learn good lifelong habits!

Need More Help?

For specific step-by-step information on kitten training and behavior, refer to the book [Think Like a Cat](#). This comprehensive book contains everything you'll need to raise your cat from kittenhood through the geriatric years.



The book experts call
the cat bible!