

# Kitten 101

## An owner's Manual

### Basic Care

Your new puppy will quickly become a cherished member of your family. Here are some tips for providing your puppy with everything he needs.

#### NEW KITTEN SHOPPING LIST

A new kitten requires a few must-have supplies and some that are just for fun. Be sure to stock up.

##### Collar

Even indoor cats should wear a collar in case they slip out the door or a window without you noticing. Pick a collar that is appropriate for your kitten's size and make sure to adjust the fit. A collar that is too tight can be uncomfortable for your kitten, but one that is too loose could slip off.



##### Tags/Microchipping

Identification tags are an essential accessory for any kitten's collar-especially if your kitten is prone to door dashing or will be an indoor/outdoor cat. If your kitten runs away, the information on those tags can be the one thing that brings him home. Microchipping is another valuable and inexpensive tool to increase your kitten's chance of making it home should he get lost.

##### Food & Water Bowls

Food and water bowls come in all shapes, sizes, colors and materials. Consider purchasing stainless steel bowls. They are pet safe and less likely to hold on to bacteria.

##### Litter Box, Litter, Scoop

Your kitten's litter box should have a short side for easy access and may have a top to contain odor. It should be large enough for the kitten to stand up and turn around. If you have multiple cats, you will need multiple litter boxes. Shop around to find the right litter for you and your kitten!

##### Toys

Kitten love anything they can play with. If it rolls, squeaks, or bounces, a kitten will want it! Cat toys are not only fun, they help with your kitten's development. Kittens need durable toys that can stand up to rough play and chewing.

## KITTEN PROOFING YOUR HOME

Before picking up your new kitten, survey your home. You might even consider getting down on your hands and knees and looking at things from a kitten's perspective. What dangers do you see?

To a new kitten, everything is a potential toy or snack! Put away anything that you don't want your kitten to chew (and potentially swallow!), especially electrical cords, rubber bands, thread/string/ribbon, toys with small parts, and drapery cords. Make sure any poisonous household products or plants are stored away and keep lids on garbage cans.

Last but not least, choose an easily accessible location for your kitten's litter box, food/water and bed. To avoid accidents, make sure the litter box is in a location that will always be available to the kitten.

## FEEDING YOUR KITTEN RIGHT

Surely you've heard the phrase "you are what you eat." Well, that applies to your kitten too. Select a cat food that is specifically formulated for kittens.

### Wet vs. Dry Food

Wet and dry foods both have their benefits for your kitten. Wet food contains more water, often has more fat and protein than dry foods, but needs to be refrigerated and spoils more easily. Dry food is generally less expensive, better for a cat's teeth, and can be left out without spoiling. Both have benefits and drawbacks, but ultimately, the choice is yours.

### How to Feed Your Kitten

Once you've selected your kitten's food, look at the serving guidelines on the bag or can based on your kitten's weight and activity level. Often the amounts listed in these guidelines are more than your kitten really needs and can lead to obesity. Consider feeding your kitten about 75% of that amount.

Kittens need double the nutritional intake of adult cats and often do well with food left out so they can eat when they are hungry. However, some indoor cats may overeat and could start gaining weight. In that case, feed a measured amount twice a day. Worried about your cat's weight? Consult your veterinarian.

## SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is a key part of your kitten's development into a stable well-adjusted cat. A poorly socialized cat will likely have issues with fear and aggression and is more likely to fight with other cats and lash out at humans.

Here are a few tips for socializing your kitten:

- Start early!
- Handle your kitten often so he gets used to being picked up and touched.

- Invite friends to meet your kitten
- Introduce your kitten to new sights and sounds

### Introducing your kitten to...



#### **Dogs**

Start by allowing the dog and kitten to see each other so you can gauge reactivity. When introducing your kitten to a dog, let them sniff each other, interact, and if all goes well, play. Be sure to provide him with a safe place to escape if he feels threatened where the dog cannot reach him. Within reasonable limits, let your cat and dog establish their own territories and power structure.

#### **Cats**

Cats are territorial animals so make sure that each cat has his own space. Introduce the cats to each other's smell using towels or blankets before they meet. When the cats do finally meet, do not rush things and monitor interactions for the first few weeks.



#### **Kids**

Children often don't understand that kittens need to be handled with care and for that reason, all interactions that children have with a new kitten should be supervised. When bringing your new kitten home, have children sit on the floor and let the kitten come to them.



## GROOMING

Cats are very good at self-grooming but will sometimes need your help. Here are some tips to keep your kitten looking his best.

### Brushing & Shedding

Most cats shed; it can't be avoided. As old hair falls out and new hair grows in its place, cats shed the dead hair (and skin) much like humans. To keep your kitten's coat healthy, cut down on the occurrence of hair balls and avoid excess fur in your home, brush your kitten regularly. Keep sessions short and positive- the sooner you start brushing your kitten, the easier it will be.

### Bathing

Most cats do not like being bathed, but sometimes it's unavoidable.

#### Do-The-Job-Right Tips:

- Fill a sink with a small amount of warm water
- Use gentle feline shampoo. Human products are too harsh
- Speak to your kitten in a soothing tone
- Massage the shampoo into your kitten's coat

- Rinse thoroughly and towel dry

### Nail Clipping

Nail trimming is important, and should start early so your kitten can get used to it at a young age. Long nails can be a danger to your kitten because they can often catch on things and rip. You can use small cat nail trimmers at home making sure to cut just the tip avoiding the pink quick. Also consider scratching pads and posts to keep your kitten's nails short. Need advice? Talk to your veterinarian for tips and strategies.

## Health & veterinary care

Aside from the basic care that you can provide, your new kitten will also require regular visits to your veterinarian.

### IMMUNIZATIONS/VACCINATIONS

#### Core Vs. Noncore

According to AAHA, the American Animal Hospital Association, and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), core vaccines are generally recommended for all cats and protect against diseases that are more serious or potentially fatal. These diseases are found in all areas of North America and are more easily transmitted than noncore diseases. The AAHA guidelines define the following as core vaccines: Panleukopenia Virus (FPV), Feline Herpesvirus-1, Feline Calicivirus (FH-1/FCV), and rabies.

Noncore vaccines are those reserved for patients at specific risk for infection due to exposure or lifestyle. The AAHA/AAFP guidelines classify Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV), Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), Bordetella and Chlamydomydia felis vaccines within the noncore group.

#### FVRCP

FVR= Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis or Herpes Virus 1, C= Calicivirus, P= Parvovirus or Panleukopenia

This vaccination should be given to your kitten between 6-8 weeks of age and then every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks of age. A booster vaccine is given at 1 year of age and then every 1-3 years thereafter.

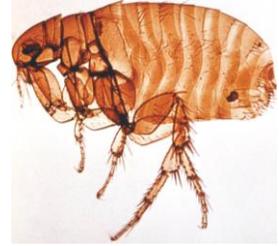
#### Rabies

The Rabies vaccine is given after your kitten is 12 weeks old and then at 1 year and typically every 3 years after that. Rabies is a severe disease that affects your pet's neurologic system and can make him more aggressive, stumble, seizure, and act like he is in a stupor. The vaccine is required in many municipalities.

## FLEAS, TICKS, & WORMS – OH MY!

### Fleas

Fleas are tiny insects that grow by feeding on the blood of other animals. Fleas reproduce very quickly and can infest your home. It can be a frustrating cycle which, if left unaddressed, can cause medical problems for animals and humans.



When selecting a flea treatment, look for a monthly preventative that kills both adult fleas and larvae while preventing reproduction of fleas.



### Ticks

Similar to fleas, ticks latch onto your pet and feed off his blood. The danger with a tick lies in the diseases it can carry. These can be dangerous to pets and humans alike. Many flea preventatives include tick management. Talk to your veterinarian to find out more.

You also want to inspect your car for ticks regularly. If you spot one, grasp it close to the cat's skin, twist and pull – unlocking the mouth and removing the tick. Once removed, flush, burn, or otherwise destroy the tick. Questions? Contact your veterinarian.

### Heartworm

Heartworm is spread by the bite of a mosquito infected with the heartworm larvae. The disease compromises a cat's heart and lungs, often leading to death. There is no approved heartworm treatment for cats and even indoor cats are at risk because mosquitoes can get through screens.

**Heartworm can be prevented and the cost is minimal.** Kittens should start on a heartworm preventative at 8 weeks of age and be tested for heartworm at 7 months, then yearly thereafter. Discuss the best preventative options for your puppy with your veterinarian.

### Intestinal Parasites

Heartworm isn't the only "worm" you have to worry about. Intestinal parasites, including hookworms, whipworms, and roundworms, can lead to poor health. These parasites are passed through stool in litter boxes or tracked in on shoes or paws and can be dangerous to humans and other pets. Regular stool tests are recommended for both indoor and outdoor cats

## SPAYING OR NEUTERING YOUR KITTEN

Unless you are planning to breed or show your kitten, spaying or neutering can provide valuable health and behavioral benefits and guarantee that your kitten won't be contributing to pet overpopulation.

**Spaying** a female before her first heat cycle significantly reduces the risk of breast cancer, uterine infections, and other types of cancer.

**Neutering** a male helps prevent fighting, spraying, and aggression and completely eliminates the chance of testicular cancer.



## DENTAL CARE

Dental care should start as soon as you get your kitten. Consider investing in treats and toys that promote good dental health. Chewing is a natural instinct for your kitten and helps scrape away tartar, plaque, and built-up food in teeth.

Start brushing your kitten's teeth early. Brush regularly, at least once a week, so it becomes part of your pet's routine. Make sure your kitten gets regular check-ups so a veterinarian can monitor his teeth.

## FIRST AID & CPR

Knowing what to do in an emergency can save your kitten's life. Be careful to avoid being hurt, bitten, or scratched by your kitten; even the most docile and loving pet can get stressed when sick or injured.

Finding your kitten isn't breathing or has no heart beat can be a terrifying experience. However, there are things you can do, like stay calm and perform pet CPR. Check out the detailed steps for pet CPR from AAHA, the American Animal Hospital Association.

## POISONOUS SUBSTANCES

There are many substances that are poisonous to cats. They should be locked or stored out of your kitten's reach. Symptoms of ingestion of a poisonous substance include vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, abnormal urine, salivation, and weakness. If you think your pet might have ingested something toxic, call your veterinary or poison control immediately.

## LITTER BOX TRAINING

Litter box training your new kitten requires patience, dedication, and accepting that there are going to be accidents.

Place the litter box in an accessible, quiet area so your kitten will have privacy. Closely supervise your kitten so you can get him to the litter box at the appropriate time. Take

him to the litter box immediately after sleeping and play sessions to avoid accidents. When he goes in the box, praise him with attention and/or a small treat.

Your kitten will stop going in the litter box if it is not cleaned often. Remove solid waste daily and change the litter weekly or sooner if needed.

\*Training Tip: Kitten not using the box? Try these suggestions. If the problem persists – consult your veterinarian.

- Move the box away from food/water, activity, or other cats' boxes
- Try a different type of litter
- Clean the box more regularly and/or remove the top

## INDOOR VS. OUTDOOR CATS

While many cats enjoy being outdoors where they can act on their natural instincts, it is not true that cats need to be allowed outdoors to be happy.

Allowing a cat to live outdoors full-time, or even part-time, opens him up to fighting, getting lost, being hit by a car, and the possibility of infectious disease.

## EXERCISE AND MENTAL STIMULATION

Playing with your kitten serves many purposes – it's a bonding activity, form of exercise, and a way to keep your kitten mentally stimulated.

Cats have a natural predatory instinct, so small toys that look like mice or birds that allow him to explore his desire to hunt are especially appealing. Some other great toys to satisfy these natural urges include a feather on a string and laser pointers.

New toys are always more exciting than old ones. Hide toys around the house or rotate your supply so your cat is always able to find a new, challenging, experience.

