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Help and advice for
new kitten parents

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welcome & congratulations on **your new kitten!**

Now that you have welcomed your adorable, playful bundle of fur into your home, let's ensure that you and your new kitten get off to the best possible start.

This guide aims to help you become a confident kitten parent by providing useful information and advice on important topics like where your kitten should sleep, how to socialise her, and what to feed her.

This guide has been written with the help of veterinary professionals and feline behaviour experts, providing useful hints, checklists, and interactive elements to assist you.

Above all, enjoy your new family member and these whirlwind kitten days... they grow up way too fast!

Boy or girl?

In this guide we will refer to your kitten in the feminine form in order to avoid having to use him/her and he/she throughout the booklet. Of course, all the same information applies equally to male kittens!

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Love the content in this guide?

Let us be part of your kitten's journey!

We'll send you emails with exclusive tips and advice to help you navigate through your kitten's first few months.

The information you receive will be tailored towards your kitten's life-stage, so you'll get the right advice when you need it.


Sign up by scanning the QR code or go to bowwowinsurance.com.au/mykitten



bringing your kitten home

Get advice at
each stage of
your kitten's
journey



One purr at a time, 
a kitten steals your heart.

Preparing your home

It is important to create a safe and quiet space for your new kitten. A separate room or secluded area away from household traffic will help her acclimatise to her new surroundings. In this space, provide all the essentials she'll need: a comfortable bed, food and water bowls, and a litter box.

Items you'll need for your new kitten

Essential items:

- Food bowl
- Water bowl
- Kitten food (see pages 10 - 12)
- Soft, warm and comfortable bed
- Litter tray and litter
- Cat carrier

Other useful items:

- Brush
- Cat toys
- Something to climb up (sturdy shelf, cat tree or perch)
- Something to hide in (e.g. cardboard box or laundry basket)
- Scratching post
- Play pen

- Cat pheromones can help some kittens feel calm and adjust to new surroundings more quickly (ask your vet for more advice).
- A familiar-scented blanket or bedding from her previous home (arrange to take one with you when you pick her up).

Giving your new kitten the best start

When you arrive home, give your kitten time to explore the safe space you have set up for her.

- Avoid moving furniture around unnecessarily
- Maintain a predictable routine
- Don't overwhelm her with too many visitors in the first few days

For [more information](#), scan here:



Your kitten's first few nights

The first few nights in a new home can be challenging for both you and your kitten. It's a huge change for her, so making the experience as stress-free as possible is important. When it's time to settle down for the night, leave your kitten in her safe space. Here are some tips to help her feel snug and secure:

- **Give her something warm** – heat up a blanket in the tumble dryer or use a hot water bottle (wrapped in a towel) to mimic the warmth of her mother.
- **Place her blanket or bedding from her previous home nearby** – the familiar scents can provide comfort and security.
- **Raise her bed** – if possible, place her bed on a low platform, as kittens often feel safer sleeping at a height.
- **Provide a safe hiding spot** – hiding under furniture, in her cat carrier, a box or pile of blankets can help her settle if she is feeling anxious.
- **Use a night light** – a dim light can help her feel more secure while she adjusts to her new environment.
- **Resist the temptation to take her into your bed** – cries for attention are normal in the first few nights but bringing her into your bed may lead to accidents or injuries. Instead, place her bed next to yours if you want her close by.



Kitten-proofing your home



Kittens like to investigate and explore. They have no concept of what is dangerous and are very inquisitive, just like a crawling baby or toddler. In all areas that your kitten can access in the house, be sure to:

- ✔ Hide electrical cables
- ✔ Secure windows and balconies
- ✔ Keep small objects, string and ribbons out of reach
- ✔ Store household cleaners, medications, and human foods safely away
- ✔ Remove any moth balls, harmful pest control products or poisonous plants



Choosing your kitten's name

Choose a few names before your kitten arrives and see which one suits her personality. Short, simple names with a clear sound are easiest for kittens to recognise.

For more tips and help choosing a name, visit our Pet Names site (bowwow.com.au)

kitten arrival

Introducing your kitten to other pets

If you have other pets at home, keep your new kitten separate from them for the first few days. The introduction process should be gradual to ensure that all of your pets feel safe and comfortable. This will allow each of them time to adjust to the presence of one another without any immediate pressure.

Step-by-step guide

- ✔ **Scent familiarisation:**
Begin by swapping bedding or toys between your kitten and your other pets so they can become familiar with each other's scents.
- ✔ **Face-to-face meetings:**
Introduce them slowly by allowing them to meet through a baby gate or with leashes on.
- ✔ **Supervised interactions:**
Once you feel confident, allow the animals to meet under supervision. Keep the interactions short at first, rewarding calm behaviour with treats.

Patience is key - it may take some time for your pets to get used to each other, and that's okay. Continue to monitor their interactions and use positive reinforcement, such as treats and praise, to reward friendly and calm interactions.





your kitten's health

Once your kitten settles in, we suggest that you make an appointment with your vet for a check-up. Use this initial appointment to discuss any concerns you might have, as well as to check your kitten's weight and overall health, and to get advice regarding feeding, desexing, de-worming, flea and tick treatments, vaccinations and microchipping.

Vaccinations

Kittens need vaccinations to protect them from serious infections and diseases.

To ensure ongoing protection for your kitten's first year, it is recommended to get the first vaccination from as early as 6 to 8 weeks of age. A booster (2nd vaccination) is recommended four weeks after the first vaccination and a further booster (3rd vaccination) should follow four weeks after the second. We recommend following your vet's advice on your kitten's specific vaccination schedule.



To learn more, scan here:

Worming and flea control

Keeping your kitten free from worms and fleas is essential for her health and happiness. Intestinal worms can cause weight loss, bloating, and discomfort, while fleas can lead to itching, anaemia, and even disease. Heartworm, transmitted by mosquitoes, can cause lasting damage to the heart and lungs and may be fatal if left untreated.

Preventative medication is the best way to protect your kitten. Vet-recommended worming, flea, and heartworm treatments are safe, effective, and easy for you to administer. Speak to your vet about the best treatment plan for your kitten.

Tick prevention

Ticks are dangerous, as they can transmit diseases. Tick paralysis is a serious and potentially fatal condition that is common in Australia. Immediate veterinary attention is required if symptoms like weakness, difficulty breathing, or loss of coordination appear. If your kitten is allowed access to the outdoors, make sure you use tick prevention products and check her for ticks after every excursion. Ask your vet for advice on the most suitable product.

Desexing / spaying

Desexing kittens has many benefits, including preventing unwanted litters, decreasing behaviours like fighting, roaming and night howling and reducing the risk of certain cancers and infections. It is mandatory in many states in Australia.

Generally, it is recommended to desex your kitten just before maturity, at around five months of age and before a female comes into heat for the first time. While desexing is a minor surgery for males, the surgery for females is more complex and recovery can take a little longer. We suggest discussing this with your vet during your first visit.

Read more about desexing here:



Microchipping

Microchipping your kitten is mandatory in almost all areas of Australia. It is the simplest way to ensure that your new family member can be identified and traced if she gets lost. If the breeder or shelter hasn't already microchipped your kitten, we recommend asking your vet to do so at your first visit.

Dental health

Dental disease is common among adult cats. It is important to start taking care of your kitten's dental health from a young age. Regularly checking her mouth, introducing gentle teeth brushing with a pet-safe toothbrush and toothpaste, and providing dental-friendly toys or treats can help establish good habits early. Your vet can also perform routine dental checks to identify any issues before they become serious.



COMMON CAT EMERGENCIES

Kittens are fragile and can become seriously ill very quickly, so recognising the signs of a medical emergency is crucial. If your kitten shows any of the following symptoms, seek veterinary care immediately.



RESPIRATORY

Rapid, shallow breaths, difficulty breathing



MOBILITY

Seizures, collapsing, loss of balance/co-ordination, lethargy



INJURY

Bite marks, bleeding, limping, swelling



TOILETING

Straining to urinate, severe vomiting or diarrhoea



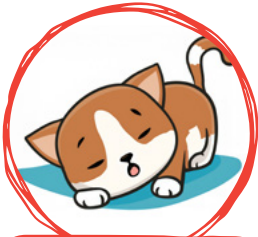
ABDOMINAL

Swollen, hard, or painful abdomen



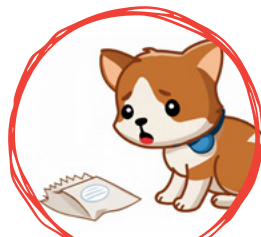
OTHER

Pale/blue gums, drooling/foaming, unresponsiveness



SEIZURES

- The most important thing to do is to prevent your cat from self-injury.
- Do not place your fingers or any object in your cat's mouth.
- Clear the area around your cat to help prevent injury during the seizure.
- Do not attempt to restrain your cat during the seizure.
- When the seizure has stopped, contact your vet for further instructions.
- If the seizure continues for more than 3 to 5 minutes, or if another seizure occurs within an hour, transport your cat immediately to the vet.



POISONING

- Seek veterinary care immediately or call the Animal Poisons Helpline (APH) on 1300 869 738.
- Try to wipe out your cat's mouth with a damp cloth.
- Do not give your cat anything to eat or drink before speaking to a vet or APH.
- Never induce vomiting unless the vet or APH advises you to do so.



WOUND CARE

- Apply pressure with gauze or a clean cloth to stop the bleeding.
- If there is debris, flush the wound with saline or clean water.
- For deep wounds or severe bleeding, keep pressure on the wound until you can get your cat to a vet.



CHOKING

- If your cat is conscious, gently restrain her to prevent injury.
- Hold the upper jaw open with one hand and look in her mouth for a foreign object.
- If you can clearly see and grasp the obstruction, carefully remove it with your fingers or tweezers.
- If you cannot see anything, do not put your fingers in her mouth, as you may push the object deeper.
- Lift your cat's hind legs into the air so her head points downward, as gravity can help dislodge the obstruction, and gently shake or jiggle once or twice.
- If the object has still not moved or become visible, seek emergency vet help.

your kitten...

naturally curious and not very cautious!

You've just brought your new kitten home, and she is as happy and healthy as can be. The last thing you want to think about is, "What happens if...?" But the truth is that kittens, like young children, are naturally curious and often get themselves into trouble while they are still growing. They explore the world with their mouths and ingest things they shouldn't, which can result in costly gastrointestinal issues.

Your kitten's immune system isn't as developed as that of an adult cat, making her more vulnerable to infections and diseases, some of which can be serious. The most common health conditions that affect kittens during their first year are gastrointestinal diseases, eye diseases, ear infections, and skin infections or allergies.

Knowledge is your best weapon in keeping your kitten safe and healthy throughout her life. Knowing what to look out for and when to call the vet allows you to relax and enjoy your time together and be the best pet parent you can be!

DID YOU KNOW?

Pain in kittens can be subtle, but signs to watch for include reduced activity, hiding, reluctance to be touched, changes in appetite, excessive grooming of a specific area, or vocalising more than usual.

AVERAGE AND HIGHEST COSTS FOR TREATMENT

	Condition	Average cost for treatment~	Highest cost for treatment~
1	Gastrointestinal conditions	\$703	\$13,918
2	Eye conditions	\$313	\$3,874
3	Ear infections	\$337	\$4,736

~Based on PetSure claims data for cats under 1 year old, 2024 calendar year

Why is pet insurance important for cats?

Some people question if it's as necessary to take out insurance for cats as it is for dogs. It's true that cats tend to have fewer veterinary visits overall, but when they do have an accident or develop an illness, treatment can still run into thousands of dollars.

Outdoor cats are more at risk when it comes to health concerns simply because they are exposed to more. But accidents happen even indoors and **being an indoor cat does not provide protection**

from the development of common cat health issues like gastrointestinal conditions, urinary tract disease, eye infections and skin allergies.

Treating your cat's health conditions can be costly. Consider pet insurance to help protect you from unexpected vet bills. Bow Wow Meow is proud to have insured more than 185,000 Aussie pets since 2008. We are real pet people who understand how important your pets are to you.

Our Nose-to-Tail Cover offers a flexible solution, with up to \$30,000 annual benefit limit, up to 90% of eligible vet bills back, and multiple annual excess options°. Other benefits include fast and easy GapOnly® claiming+ and access to 24/7 Live Vet support^. You can sign up your kitten from any age.

Real stories from kitten parents

Tiko's double trauma



"Our kitten Tiko has had a very eventful start to her life, and I am so grateful that Bow Wow Meow Pet Insurance gave us a happy ending to this story...not once but twice! On Easter eve, Tiko escaped from the house when my young daughter accidentally let her out. We found her the next morning in a terrible condition. She had been attacked by a dog and had bite wounds all over her body. We rushed her to the Emergency Vet where she spent 3 days in intensive care following a long surgery. After this, we took extra care to keep her safely indoors. However, a month later we realised that some of my kids' foam bath toys were missing. The next morning, I found Tiko vomiting and in a lot of pain. I rushed her to the Cat Clinic where she had emergency surgery to remove foam from her intestines, followed by 6 days in-clinic recovery. Who would have thought that an indoor cat would have had over \$11,000 in claims within 2 months? I debated whether to get insurance for her, but I am so glad I did. Bow Wow Meow were fantastic – our claims were paid on the spot with GapOnly® or reimbursed quickly – and without them we would have had to choose between losing our much-loved cat or being heavily in debt to save her."

– Katie, August 2025*



Xiaoke's emergency surgery



"When our kitten Xiaoke swallowed an earplug on a Sunday, we rushed her to emergency. She needed surgery and spent almost a week in hospital. We weren't sure how much would be covered, but Bow Wow Meow ended up reimbursing nearly \$10,000 – and we only paid 20%! The whole process was super easy, no paperwork needed, and the money came through quickly. Xiaoke just turned one – she's full of energy, always hungry, and back to bouncing around like nothing ever happened! We're so glad we insured her early on – it gave us peace of mind and made all the difference during a stressful time."

– ZY, July 2025*



*Testimonials and customer experience may vary depending on individual circumstances. Claims are assessed subject to policy terms and conditions.

Lily's fall & fractures



"Having reluctantly made the grudge purchase of cat insurance for my then 6-month-old kitten Lily, little did I know that it was the best choice I could have financially made during the costly Christmas period. Three months later, she accidentally fell 1.5 stories down from my balcony to the concrete floor below, fracturing her two front legs and dislocating her hind leg. Following \$10,033 of surgery and hospital treatment, Bow Wow Meow effortlessly refunded 80% of my claim a few weeks later. Sadly, our beloved Lily was hit by a car and passed away just before Christmas. However, I still have my other two beautiful cats insured through Bow Wow Meow."

– Brad, June 2025*



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your kitten's diet & feeding



What should I feed my kitten?

Because they grow at such a fast rate, kittens have higher nutritional demands than adult cats. They require high levels of good quality protein, essential fatty acids, and more calories than their adult counterparts. The correct balance of calcium and phosphorous is also essential to support their rapid growth and bone development.

This is why growing kittens should be fed a diet formulated specifically for kittens until one year of age. Although the protein level in adult food may be adequate, other key nutrients and energy content will not be balanced for optimal growth.

To prevent overfeeding, which can lead to obesity, follow the feeding instructions on the pet food label and consult your vet for personalised advice. Additionally, ensure your kitten always has access to fresh, clean water.

For the first few weeks, it's best to keep your kitten on the same food that her breeder or previous owner was providing. If, once she has settled in, you'd like to change to a different food, gradually introduce the new food over 7 to 10 days to avoid stomach issues. You may find the chart below helpful.

TRANSITIONING TO A NEW FOOD

	% of old food	% of new food
Day 1	80	20
Day 2	70	30
Day 3	60	40
Day 4	50	50
Day 5	40	60
Day 6	30	70
Day 7	20	80
Day 8	10	90
Day 9	0	100

DID YOU KNOW?

If, during the transition period your kitten gets loose stools, stay on the same ratio for an extra day or two. It might take her longer to transition to the new food, but you will be helping her digestive system to catch up and hopefully avoiding more mess!





Healthy weight

An overweight kitten will be more likely to grow into an overweight adult cat. As your kitten is growing, carrying excess weight is not good for her joints.

Refer to the images below to get an idea of healthy body size and shape.

Ideal weight



Emaciated



Thin



Overweight



Obese



Feeding schedule vs free feeding

Feeding your kitten on a regular schedule can help prevent overeating and establish a routine. On the other hand, free feeding – where food is left out all the time to be eaten at your kitten’s will – is thought to increase the risk of obesity.

Free-feeding kittens is usually done with dry food. This is convenient for pet parents, especially if you have a busy schedule – your kitten can eat when she wants and will ideally self-regulate how much she needs. However, some kittens will overeat and put on excess weight.

If you are not free-feeding, be aware that younger kittens (6 to 16 weeks) need to be fed several meals per day. This is more time-consuming and labour intensive for pet parents, although automatic feeders that release a measured amount of food at specified times can be a great help.

Here’s a suggested feeding schedule for kittens that have been weaned:

- Three to four meals per day up to age 6 months
- Two meals per day thereafter

What about raw feeding?

A raw feeding diet involves providing cats with uncooked, natural ingredients to mimic their ancestral diet. It comprises a combination of raw meat, raw organs and raw meaty bones such as chicken necks. It’s important to consult your vet before embarking on raw feeding, to make sure you are providing all the nutrition your kitten needs. Good hygiene practices are also essential when raw feeding.

Rest assured that commercially produced dry, wet, freeze-dried or air-dried food formulated specifically for kittens can provide balanced and safe nutrition for growing kittens.

Get advice at each stage of your kitten’s journey!

Sign up to get emails with tailored advice on raising your kitten through to adulthood. Scan QR code or visit bowwowinsurance.com.au/mykitten



The most dangerous foods for cats



 Onions, chives & leeks

 Mushrooms

 Rhubarb

 Garlic

 Grapes & raisins

 Chocolate & cocoa

 Cooked bones

 Caffeine & coffee

 Green / raw potatoes

Foods to be wary of:

- dairy products
- fat trimmings
- spicy / processed meats
- raw bones
- raw eggs

Alcohol 

Seeds from apples, plums, apricots & cherries 

Xylitol 

Sugar / gum 

Tobacco 

Avocado 

Macadamia nuts 

Bread dough / yeast 

Good for humans, safe for kittens (in moderation)

- **Chicken/turkey (cooked, no bones)**
- **Fish/salmon (cooked, no bones)**
- **Canned fish (in water, low salt)**
- **Eggs (cooked)**
- **Pumpkin (cooked)**
- **Carrots (cooked)**
- **Sweet potatoes (cooked)**
- **Peas/green beans (cooked)**
- **Steamed rice**
- **Natural plain/Greek yoghurt**





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{ Kitten care – from nose to tail }

Introducing your kitten to grooming

Grooming is an essential part of kitten care, helping to keep her healthy and in top condition. Grooming can also help strengthen your bond with your kitten. It's best to start grooming as early as possible so she becomes comfortable with the process. Begin with short, gentle sessions, and reward her with treats and praise to create a positive association with the activity. Keep sessions relaxed and enjoyable to prevent stress and make grooming easier as she grows.

Brushing

Brushing helps to remove dirt and loose fur, and prevents knots, especially in long-haired kittens. Use a soft-bristle brush or a fine-toothed comb, working in the direction of the fur. Start with short, gentle strokes, increasing the length of the session as your kitten gets used to it. Long-haired kittens should be brushed daily to prevent matting and tangles, while medium to short-haired breeds can be brushed once or twice a week.

Trimming nails

Kittens' claws grow quickly and need regular trimming to prevent scratching and snagging on furniture. Use special cat nail clippers and trim only the tip of the nail, avoiding the pink area (known as the 'quick'), as it contains nerves and blood vessels. If your kitten resists, start by handling her paws gently every day before introducing the clippers.

Bathing

Most kittens keep themselves clean, but occasional baths may be needed, especially for long-haired breeds or if they get into something dirty. Make sure to introduce baths slowly and positively to avoid stress.

To prepare, fill a small tub or sink with a few centimetres of lukewarm water. Gently wet her fur, then lather a mild, kitten-safe shampoo into her fur, and rinse thoroughly. Towel-dry her afterwards and keep her warm until she is completely dry. If you prefer, use cat safe wipes as a less stressful alternative for minor cleanups.

Teeth cleaning

Because dental disease is a common and expensive problem for older cats, we recommend introducing regular teeth brushing during the kitten stage. Getting her used to teeth brushing early is a lot easier than trying to start when she's older and more resistant to changes.

Using kitten-safe toothpaste (never human toothpaste - it's toxic to cats), start with a finger brush or even just your finger wrapped in gauze. Begin slowly: let her taste the toothpaste first, then gradually work up to short brushing sessions. Focus on gentle brushing of the outer surfaces of her teeth.





socialisation and early learning

Why is socialisation important?

Socialising kittens is crucial for their development, helping to shape them into confident, friendly, and well-adjusted cats. Socialisation means controlled positive exposure and interaction with various objects, sounds, smells, people, animals and environments. For example, if kittens are only exposed to three or four people in their family, they are more likely to become fearful of, or aggressive towards, other people as they grow up. On the other hand, well-socialised cats are less likely to develop behavioural issues such as aggression, fearfulness, or anxiety in unfamiliar situations.

Early socialisation will help your kitten become comfortable with people, other animals, and new environments. Once she has settled in, we suggest gradually starting to socialise her to different situations.

How to socialise your kitten

Start early: The younger the kitten, the easier socialisation will be. Begin as soon as she is comfortable in your home and starts exploring.

Go slowly: Introduce new experiences gradually to prevent overwhelming her.

Use positive reinforcement: Reward her with treats, praise, or gentle petting when she reacts calmly.

Encourage play: Interactive play with toys will help her build confidence and bond with people.

Expose her to different environments:

If safe, take her for short, supervised visits to different parts of your house or secure outdoor spaces.

Gradually introduce your kitten to

- ✔ **Different people (including men, women and children) to prevent fear of strangers.**
- ✔ **Other pets, such as friendly dogs and cats, under controlled conditions.**
- ✔ **Common household noises like vacuum cleaners, doorbells, and washing machines.**
- ✔ **Being handled and picked up by you and other people, including touching her paws, ears, and mouth.**
- ✔ **Being stroked and groomed, to help prepare her for brushing, teeth cleaning and nail trimming.**

Your children and your new kitten



Having a kitten in the family can be a wonderful experience for children, but it's important to ensure that they know how to interact safely with the new family member. Kittens are playful and curious, but they're also small and delicate, so it's essential to teach children how to handle them properly.






1. **Gently does it:** Young children may not realise that your kitten is fragile, so it's important to teach them to be gentle when petting her or picking her up. Show them how to stroke the kitten softly and avoid pulling on her ears, tail or fur.
2. **Respecting personal space:** Children should understand that your kitten needs time to rest and eat. Teach them not to disturb her while she is eating or sleeping. This gives your kitten space to feel safe and secure in her environment.
3. **Avoid chasing or grabbing:** Kittens are naturally playful, but they may get scared if they're chased or grabbed by the legs or tail. Teach children to engage in gentle play, using toys instead of their hands, and to never chase or corner her. This reduces the likelihood of stress or fear in your kitten and prevents behaviours like scratching or biting out of defence.

Kids and pets belong together, and will often develop extremely close and loving bonds for life. You are giving your children a wonderful gift - not just a playmate, but an opportunity to learn about developing responsibility and having respect for animals. Most of all, you are giving them pure, unconditional love!

Introducing your kitten to the vet

Early introduction to the vet is important for your kitten's long-term health and wellbeing. Just like humans, cats often feel nervous or anxious about medical visits. Cats who are not socialised to the vet may develop a fear of vet visits, which can make future check-ups, vaccinations, and treatments more difficult. If your kitten has positive experiences early on, she will be more likely to associate the vet with comfort and care, rather than stress. This reduces the risk of behavioural problems like aggression or hiding when it's time for a vet visit.

Tips for vet visits

-  **Start early:** Begin taking your kitten to the vet clinic from an early age, even if it's just for a quick visit for no specific purpose. This will help her become familiar with the sights, sounds, and smells of the clinic.
-  **Positive associations:** Make vet visits a positive experience. Bring treats or favourite toys with you and reward your kitten at the clinic and after the visit. This way, she will learn that trips to the vet lead to something good.
-  **Practice handling:** Get your kitten used to being handled as she would be by the vet. Touch her ears, paws, and open her mouth gently, and practice lifting her up and placing her down.
-  **Frequent car rides:** Take your kitten on short car rides in her carrier. This will help her become accustomed to travel and reduce anxiety about being in her carrier (see carrier training tips on page 17).
-  **Stay calm:** Cats are sensitive to your emotions. If you stay calm and relaxed during vet visits, your kitten will be more likely to remain calm as well.



Training your kitten

By starting training early and using positive reinforcement, you can teach your kitten a range of useful behaviours, helping her grow into a happy and well-behaved adult cat. Untrained kittens may develop habits like biting, scratching furniture, or avoiding the litter box. Training helps redirect these instincts in healthy ways.

Establishing household rules

When you bring your new kitten into your home, it's important to establish clear and consistent rules right from the start. This will help your kitten understand what's expected of her and ensure everyone in the household knows exactly what she is and isn't allowed to do.

One of the first things to decide is where your kitten is allowed to go in the house and what furniture she can access. For example, you may want to restrict her from certain areas like the kitchen or your bedroom, or you may decide that the new sofa is off-limits. Be consistent with these boundaries, as kittens thrive on routine and structure. If you let your kitten on the sofa one day and not the next, she will become confused about the rules.



Teaching basic commands

Verbal command	Why teach it?	How to teach it
"Come"	Important for her safety and strengthens your ability to communicate and bond with her.	Start by saying her name followed by 'come' while offering a treat. Repeat this regularly in different settings until she responds every time.
"Sit"	Helps build focus and calm behaviour, making it easier to manage her in different situations. Good foundation for learning tricks.	Use a treat to lure your kitten into a sitting position, then reward her immediately when she does so.
"Leave it"	Helps keep your kitten safe by preventing her from interacting with dangerous or inappropriate objects.	Begin by holding a treat in your closed hand and letting her sniff it only. When she loses interest, say 'leave it' and reward her with a different treat from your other hand.
"No"	Essential for setting boundaries and stopping unwanted behaviours.	Use a firm 'no' when she engages in undesirable behaviour (like scratching furniture) and redirect her to something appropriate, such as a scratching post.

Tips for training your kitten:

- 1 Use positive reinforcement:** Reward your kitten with treats, praise, or play when she follows your instructions. This encourages her to repeat the behaviour.
- 2 Be patient:** Training takes time, especially with kittens. Keep sessions short (around 5–10 minutes) to maintain her attention.
- 3 Consistency is key:** Make sure everyone in the household uses the same commands and methods to avoid confusing your kitten.
- 4 Avoid punishment:** Never punish your kitten for mistakes. Instead, redirect her behaviour or use a firm "no" followed by showing her the correct action.

What else should I teach my kitten?



Carrier training

Begin by placing the carrier in a familiar area with the door open and let her explore it at her own pace. Add a blanket or clothing with your scent to make it inviting. Gradually encourage her to enter, rewarding her each time. Once she is comfortable, close the door for short periods while remaining nearby, then slowly increase the duration. Next, carry the carrier around for a few minutes, rewarding her for calm behaviour. You can also feed your kitten her meals in the carrier to create a positive association. Keep sessions short and positive, never forcing her in, and offer treats for good behaviour to ensure she sees the carrier as a safe space.

Using a scratching post

Kittens naturally want to scratch, so teaching them where to scratch is key to preserving your furniture. Encourage your kitten to use her scratching post by rubbing catnip on it or playing around it with toys. When she scratches the post, reward her with praise and treats.

Bite inhibition

Kittens often bite during interactive play. Teach your kitten not to bite by gently but firmly stopping the interaction when she bites. Use a soft voice or a short "ouch" to signal that the behaviour is not acceptable. Reward her with play when she stops biting.

Playing fetch

Some kittens can learn to play fetch. Use a small, soft toy to toss and encourage your kitten to bring it back to you. It may take some time, but with patience, she could learn to return toys to you, just like a dog!

Leash training

If you'd like to take your kitten outside, it's a good idea to train her to walk on a leash. Start by getting her used to wearing a harness indoors before attaching a lightweight leash. Slowly guide her around, rewarding her for walking with you.



Toilet training

Toilet training kittens is usually straightforward, as they instinctively seek out litter trays. Here are our top tips for helping the process along:

- ✔ Provide a clean, low-sided tray that's easy to access (ideally one per cat, plus an extra).
- ✔ Open trays are simple and accessible but don't control odour as well as covered trays, which offer more privacy. High-sided trays help contain mess, while self-cleaning options reduce maintenance but may not suit all cats.
- ✔ Place the litter tray in a quiet, low-traffic area away from food and water bowls.
- ✔ Most kittens prefer fine-textured, unscented clumping litter, though preferences can vary, so you may need to experiment.
- ✔ Scoop daily and wash the tray weekly with warm, soapy water.
- ✔ If you plan to encourage outdoor toileting later, gradually move the tray closer to the door over several weeks.

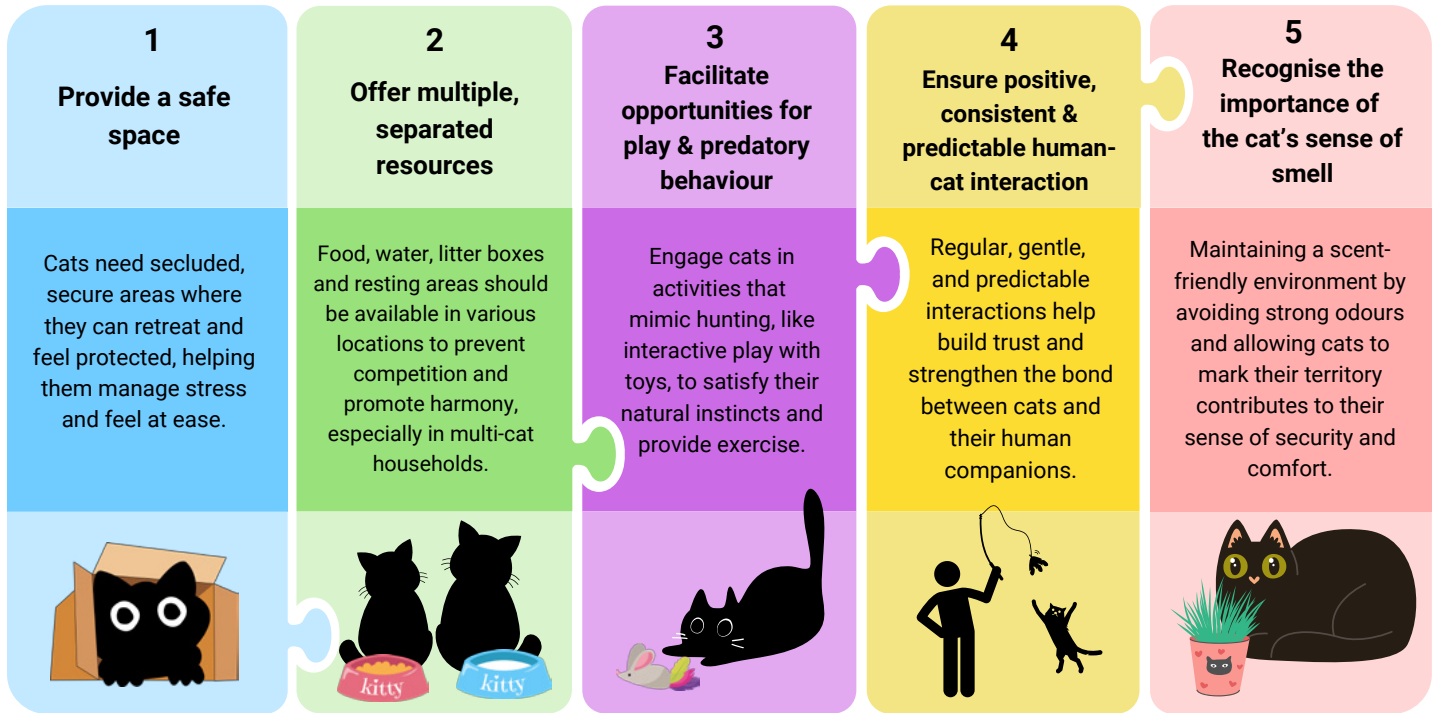


Learn more about toilet training here:



Enrichment and play

THE FIVE PILLARS OF A HEALTHY FELINE ENVIRONMENT












How to enrich your kitten's environment

Indoor environmental enrichment is essential for your kitten's well-being, helping to prevent boredom and reduce stress. Enrichment will allow your kitten opportunities to engage in normal feline behaviours such as scratching, playing, hunting and hiding.

Play is an important part of your kitten's healthy development, as it teaches her essential life skills and lessons about the world around her. Play provides mental stimulation and physical activity for cats of all ages, keeping them active, entertained and engaged. While many cats will play on their own, playing with their humans strengthens bonding and facilitates communication. Play is a safe outlet for pent-up energy and a great way to keep their minds active.

Here are some suggestions:

-  **Interactive toys**
Feather wands, laser pointers, and puzzle toys that dispense treats engage your kitten's hunting instincts and provide mental stimulation. Note that it's important to finish off a laser pointer game with some sort of reward or "prey", so that she is not hunting/chasing for no reason.
-  **Climbing and scratching**
Cat trees, shelves, and scratching posts offer exercise and an appropriate outlet for scratching behaviour.
-  **Hide-and-seek games**
Hide toys or treats around the house to encourage exploration and mental stimulation.
-  **Window views**
Set up a perch or hammock by a window so your kitten can watch the outside world, providing endless entertainment.
-  **Training and tricks**
Teach your kitten simple tricks like sitting or shaking paws using positive reinforcement.
-  **Rotating toys**
Keep your kitten engaged by rotating toys regularly to maintain her interest.
-  **DIY ideas**
Create puzzle feeders from egg cartons or make toys from cardboard and fabric scraps.
-  **Catnip and silvervine**
These are natural stimulants that encourage play and exploration, activities that will help keep your kitten happy, healthy, and mentally stimulated.
-  **Companionship**
If your kitten is social, consider adopting another cat, but be sure to introduce them to each other slowly.

Interactive CAT Play

by Dr. Mikel Delgado



Toys that are left lying on the floor are “dead”. They are boring. Fun toys are like **prey!** They are usually small and quiet, and **they move!**

Playing is an **interactive** experience: a simulated hunting experience that gives cats physical exercise and stimulates their brains. We tailor our play to our individual cat’s needs. Are they a generalist or a specialist?

Playing is also a way to bond with our cat. Not all cats like to be cuddled.

Make play a daily habit or activity. eg, before their dinner or bedtime, and whenever they have the zoomies! Just as dogs need to go out for walks and to sniff, cats need **enrichment** and shouldn’t be sleeping all day.

Prey Types

for the SPECIALIST HUNTER*

feathers eg, Da Bird

mouse-like eg, Cat Catcher

drag it away or across

bug-like eg, Cat Dancer

CORK or CARDBOARD
WIRE

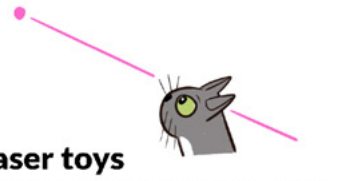
good for shy cats
jiggle gently

snake-like eg, Bamboozler

FRAYED ROPE



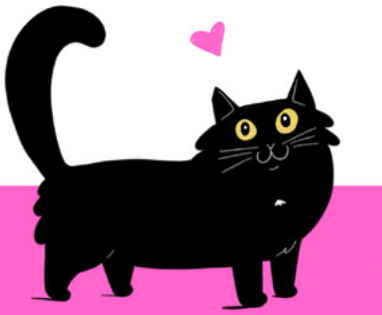
food puzzles
Introduce as a choice and never force. Many cats enjoy these. foodpuzzlesforcats.com



laser toys
...can be frustrating because cats can’t catch them. Best use for short periods as a warm-up, then switch to a real toy.

NOVELTY: Rotate the toys to keep things interesting!

*For safety reasons, interactive toys with string/wire should be stored securely after play.



Play Tips

- **ALTERNATE SPEED OF MOVEMENT.** Try slow movements. Barely moving.
- **MOVE AWAY** from your cat or along a L-R plane.
- **MOVE UNDER SOMETHING.**
- Sounds of **RUSTLING** or **CRUNCHINESS** are exciting!
- **LET THEM WAIT.** Don’t make it too easy or it will be boring.
- **NOT TOO CLOSE.** Cats can see the toy best when it is a few feet away.
- Give the **FULL HUNTING EXPERIENCE** - paws, mouth, and whiskers!
- Most importantly, **HAVE FUN** playing with your little hunter!

Have you played with your cat TODAY?



Kitten DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Kittens progress through 5 distinct stages as they grow into adulthood, and each has its own specific growth milestones, as well as some predictable behaviours.

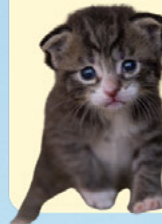
0 – 2 WEEKS: NEWBORN

Kittens are born blind, deaf, and fully reliant on their mother for warmth, feeding, and cleaning. They sleep and nurse almost constantly.



2 – 4 WEEKS: SENSES AWAKEN

Eyes and ears begin to open, and kittens start taking their first wobbly steps. They begin exploring and can tolerate gentle human handling.



4 – 8 WEEKS: WEANING AND PLAY

Kittens start eating solid food and become more playful. Social skills and motor coordination improve through play with littermates.



8 – 16 WEEKS: SOCIALISATION

This is the prime time for socialisation. Kittens are open to new experiences and can begin basic training and bonding with people.



4 – 6 MONTHS: ADOLESCENCE

Energy levels spike, and teething begins. Kittens may become more independent, so continued play, training, and structure are key.





Understanding how cats communicate

Feline communication comprises body language, vocalisation, and even scent cues that we humans can't detect. It can be as obvious as a loud hiss or as subtle as a gentle flick of the tail. Body language can be expressed via your kitten's facial expressions, fur and body posture. All these elements work together to send a message about what your kitten is thinking, feeling or trying to tell you.

It's important that you try to be aware of your kitten's body language because many feline behaviour problems arise from miscommunication. Cats try to tell us how they feel and what they want, and it must be very frustrating for them when we don't understand. Learning to interpret your kitten's body language will pay off in the long run – it will give you greater insight into her moods and feelings and will help strengthen your relationship.



CAT LANGUAGE



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Get advice at each stage of your kitten's journey!

Sign up to get emails with tailored advice on raising your kitten through to adulthood. Scan QR code or visit bowwowinsurance.com.au/mykitten



Safe outdoor access ♥ for your kitten



Increasingly, cats are being kept solely indoors, both for their safety and environmental reasons. Most cats adapt well to living indoors, especially if this lifestyle is implemented from an early age. However, being an indoor cat doesn't mean your kitten has to miss out entirely on outdoor experiences. With a few precautions and the right conditions, she can enjoy outdoor time in a safe and secure way.

Here are a few ideas:

- **Create a catio:**
A catio is an outdoor cat enclosure that provides a contained way for your kitten to enjoy the fresh air. These can range from small patio setups to larger, multi-level, free-standing structures. You can buy or build a catio using materials like netting and wood.
- **Set up a cat run:**
A cat run is an enclosed tunnel along the length of your garden or yard that provides your kitten with space to run back and forth. It can link via a cat door to your home or it can extend from a catio.
- **Install cat-proof fencing:**
Cat-proofing your fencing, either by raising it or installing an escape barrier on top, is one of the simplest ways to ensure that your kitten cannot leave your property and that other cats can't get in.
- **Build a balcony enclosure:**
If you have a balcony, you can create a secure enclosure with sturdy, low-visibility mesh, allowing your kitten to enjoy the view safely.
- **Leash training:**
Leash train your kitten using a harness, starting indoors before moving to safe, outdoor spaces for exploration (see page 17).
- **Supervised outdoor time:**
If you allow your kitten outside, ensure she is always supervised. This means keeping a close eye on her to prevent her from escaping. Or, she may be happy to be harnessed and secured to a stationary object to enjoy the outdoors while you are relaxing or gardening nearby (but be sure to never leave her alone while she is tethered).

Keep this page in a handy place for easy access

Top 10 most dangerous toxins for cats

1 Lilies

Lilies are highly toxic to cats. Any exposure, including grooming of pollen, can result in life-threatening kidney failure.



2 Sago palms / cycads

Ingestion of any part of these plants by a cat can result in life-threatening toxicity, even just one seed or leaf.



3 Autumn crocus

These contain a potent alkaloid that can cause severe organ damage, GI distress, respiratory failure and even death if ingested.



4 Oleander

All parts of the oleander contain a toxin that affects the electrical activity of the heart, and even small quantities can be deadly.



5 Insecticides

Cats are very sensitive to pyrethroid insecticides. Flea & tick treatments for dogs that contain permethrin are highly toxic for cats.



6 Paracetamol

This common analgesic is poorly metabolised by cats. Even small ingestions can damage the red blood cells and liver.



7 Engine coolant

Cats are highly susceptible to ethylene glycol's toxic effects. Ingestion can lead to neurological signs and kidney damage.



8 Household cleaners

Ingestion of even dilute solutions of a common ingredient, benzalkonium chloride, can damage the cat's GI tract.



9 Rat bait

Anti-coagulants work by causing uncontrollable bleeding. Blood clotting problems can persist for months after ingestion.



10 Moth balls

These contain harmful chemicals which can cause serious illness or death if ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin.



If your cat ingests, absorbs or inhales a toxic substance, signs of poisoning can range widely, but some of the more common ones include unexplained vomiting, diarrhoea, drooling, hyperactivity, muscle tremors, shock or seizures. If you suspect she might have chewed or eaten something toxic, take a sample of the plant, food or substance to your vet and have her checked straight away, or call the **Animal Poisons Helpline on 1300 869 738**.

Emergency contact information

Kitten name: _____

DOB: _____

Microchip number: _____

Your vet: _____

Phone number: _____

Address: _____

Your nearest 24/7 emergency vet: _____

Phone number: _____

Address: _____

Pet insurance company: _____

Policy number: _____

Phone number: _____

*Policy T&Cs, limits, exclusions and waiting periods apply. Annual excess may apply.

+The gap is defined as the difference between the eligible vet's invoice and the claim benefit under your policy. GapOnly® is only available at participating vets. Please visit gaponly.com.au/find-a-gaponly-vet to search for GapOnly® enabled vets. GapOnly® is a trademark owned by PetSure (Australia) Pty Ltd ABN 95 075 949 923, AFSL 420183 (PetSure).

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