

First let us say that we are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your kitten's health care. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your kitten's health, please feel free to call our hospital. Either one of the technicians or doctors will be happy to help you.

Behavior

How should I introduce my kitten to its new environment?

A cat is naturally inclined to investigate its new surroundings. It is suggested that the cat's area of exploration be initially limited so that these natural tendencies do not create an unmanageable task. After confining the cat to one room for the first few days, you should slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

How should I introduce my new kitten to my other cat?

Most kittens receive a hostile reception from other household pets, especially from another cat. The other cat usually sees no need for a kitten in the household and these feelings are reinforced if it perceives that special favoritism is being shown the kitten. The existing cat must not feel that it is necessary to compete for food or attention. The new kitten should have its own food and food bowl and it should not be permitted to eat from the other cat's bowl. Although it is natural to spend time holding and cuddling the kitten, the existing cat will quickly sense that it is being neglected. The new kitten needs lots of love and attention, but the existing cat should not be slighted. In fact, the transition will be smoother if the existing cat is given more attention than normal.

The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and will have one of three possible outcomes.

1. The existing cat will remain hostile to the kitten. Fighting may occasionally occur, especially if both try to eat out of the same bowl at the same time. This is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and affection are minimized during the first few weeks.
2. The existing cat will only tolerate the kitten. Hostility will cease, but the existing cat will act as if the kitten is not present. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been an only cat for several years, or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks. This relationship is likely to be permanent.
3. Bonding will occur between the existing cat and the kitten. They will play together, groom each other, and sleep near each other. This is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and if the existing cat has been lonely for companionship.

How should I introduce my new kitten to my dog?

At the first introduction there may be no immediate problems so that reinforcement of desirable responses may be all that is required. If there is some mild anxiety on the part of your dog then introductions should be controlled, gradual, supervised and always positive. Your new kitten could be placed in a carrier or on a leash and harness so that it will not provoke your dog. Then using a leash for control, favored rewards and your training commands, encourage your dog to sit

or stay calmly in the presence of the cat. Calm investigation should then be encouraged and reinforced. A leash and head halter could be used to further improve control and safety. Any initial anxiety should soon decrease and the kitten should quickly learn its limits with the dog including how to avoid confrontation by climbing or hiding. If you are not positive that you can safely leave the dog and kitten together, then a basket muzzle could be placed on your dog while you monitor the situation. If, on the other hand there is the possibility of aggression or injury then a behavior consultation would be advisable.

What type of playing should I expect from a kitten?

Stimulating play is important during the first week. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in kittens and have an important role in proper muscular development. If given a sufficient outlet for these behaviors with toys, your kitten will be less likely to use family members for these activities. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper, small balls, and string or ribbon. Kittens should ALWAYS be supervised when playing with string or ribbons to avoid swallowing them. Any other toy that is small enough to be swallowed should also be avoided.

How do I insure that my kitten is well socialized?

The socialization period for cats is between 2 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, dogs, other cats, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social events as possible with your FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

How can I teach my cat to enjoy handling?

Depending on the personality and early experiences as a kitten, your cat may enjoy, accept, or dislike certain types of handling from petting to bathing. In order for the cat to learn to accept and enjoy a variety of types of physical contact from humans, it is critical that the human hand only be associated with positive experiences and that all physical punishment is avoided. Begin with those types of handling that the cat enjoys or is willing to accept, and provide small treats at each of the first few sessions. Once the cat learns to associate food with these sessions, slightly longer or intense sessions can be practiced. This type of handling can be used to help the cat become accustomed to, and perhaps enjoy, petting, grooming, teeth brushing, nail trimming, and even bathing. Never force this type of handling upon your cat, as any negative experience will only make the problem worse and the cat more resistant to further handling.