

Preparing For Your New Kitten

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If you've thought long and hard about your decision to get a kitten, you have the advantage of being able to prepare your home for the new arrival. The first thing that you need to do is organise some time off work, or at the very least, make sure that you arrange to collect the kitten on a weekend.

All kittens are different. Some take everything in their stride with minimum stress, and others become very anxious at any changes in their circumstances. This can apply to littermates, not just different breeds. It is best to assume your new kitten will be upset by being separated from its mother and litter mates and taken to strange new surroundings. Leaving a kitten alone will only exacerbate this anxiety, whereas providing support and comfort during this time will definitely help to form a bond between you and your new companion. While you might want to show off your new kitten, too many people and too much noise can cause a kitten to become stressed and this can quickly lead to illness. The only social engagement for the first day or so should be limited to your veterinarian for a quick check up.



The following suggestions can help to make the transition to your home less stressful.

Make sure you have acquired anything that you will need for the kitten in advance. The first essential item is a secure cat carrier as a kitten or cat should never be transported loose in a car. You will also need food and water containers, bedding, litter tray (and litter), a scratching post and some toys that are appropriate for the kitten's size and age. If you take a small blanket with you to the breeder, the blanket can be rubbed on the mother to collect some of her scent. Having this to sleep on can have a reassuring affect on the kitten.

Sudden changes in the kitten's diet can cause diarrhoea. If you have pre-ordered a kitten from a breeder or rescue shelter it should be easy to obtain details of their diet beforehand, to ensure that you have the right food available. Otherwise, you should try and obtain the same food on the way home. The kitten will also be more likely to eat if the food is familiar. If you are unable to obtain the same food, choose a good quality processed kitten food, rather than relying on the kitten to eat adult cat food, raw meat or human scraps, as these are likely to upset the kitten's digestive system. Kittens need to eat more often than adult cats, which is one of the reasons that it is best to be at home with a new kitten. A normal eight hour working day is too long for a very young kitten to wait for a meal. Food should be left for the kitten to access if you are going to be away for a full day but this is not ideal as the food may spoil before you get home. If you work away from home, the best option is to get some time off work or arrange for someone to drop in and check and feed the kitten in the middle of the day.

You need to know where the kitten is going to sleep. If you don't intend to share your bed with your cat then do not allow the kitten to sleep on the bed. Find a warm and secure area to place your kitten's bed but don't be surprised to find your new friend curled up asleep in a drawer of socks, a pot plant or even

inside a couch! It is best to introduce your kitten to your home slowly in order to reduce his or her stress. Select a secure room in the house where your kitten can live until it is showing signs that it is ready to explore the rest of her new world!



It is crucial that the kitten is held securely inside so that it cannot get out onto the street or come to harm in any other way, such as falling into a pool or gaining access to potentially aggressive dogs next door. Kittens are small and flexible and have a knack of being able to get under gates and through gaps in fences. I would also advise that you buy a safe kitten collar and engraved pet tag as soon as possible. This way if an accident does happen and your kitten escapes outside the chances are increased that it will be returned to you if found. You should also discuss microchipping with your vet at the first visit.

The First Days

Don't be surprised if the confident little creature you selected from the litter turns into a fearful kitten at your home, hiding under furniture and reacting very nervously to new sights and sounds. This is where some sensitivity and patience on your part comes into play. Let the kitten stay in his hiding place (as long as it is a safe area) and place a litterbox and a bowl of water nearby. Offer food after an hour or two and spend some time sitting nearby just quietly talking to him and purring. When it is ready it will come out on its own accord as long as you don't overwhelm it with demands. Keep children and other animals away from a kitten that is settling in until it indicates that it is ready by displaying some curious and exploratory behaviour.

Kittens may cry out/miaow on their first night away from their mother and while this can make sleep for their new owners difficult, it usually doesn't last too long. Once your kitten has settled in to the house and is busy discovering new games and toys you may also discover that cats are nocturnal. Being woken in the middle of the night by a rampaging kitten can put a strain on any new relationship. The following are some ways you can minimise your kittens noisy nocturnal activities:

- Tire your kitten out with a strenuous play session just before your bedtime. If your kitten is sleeping at this time then wake her up! (It won't think twice about waking you up in the middle of the night if its is bored.....)
- Take away noisy toys at night time.
- Don't give in and get up during the night to play with or feed your kitten - this will just reinforce the behaviour