



Kitten 101: Socialization

Socialization benefits both your new kitten and the two legged members of the family. It is a key element to developing relationships between the kitten and its owner, as well as among a variety of other members in the community.

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Socialization



The first few months of a kitten's life are critical to its health and development. A well socialized cat is one that gets along well with all different types of people and animals. This takes deliberate effort on your part, and ideally this exposure starts between 2 & 7 weeks of age.

Although kittens without socialization can still have wonderful lives, they may be less outgoing and open to new situations. The variety of new situations is just as key as the frequency at which they are exposed. Kittens with early and consistent socialization will benefit greatly throughout the many interactions and relationships in their life.

Things to Do

- Read your kitten's body language and make each introduction comfortable.
 - Comfortable = Body relaxed, ears up, tail up, purring
 - Uncomfortable = Backing away, ears back, covering, tail fluffed or flicking, hissing
- Identify a favored reward;
 - Special toy / Treat / Petting
- Invite friends and family to visit frequently. Upon introduction, have the new person offer a favored reward. Make sure to include all different groups of people in this process.
- Gradually introduce new cats and/or dogs living outside the home using the appropriate separation and any other safety measures necessary. Be sure to introduce your kitten to other known healthy pets.

Things to Avoid

- Overwhelming your kitten. If your kitten shows signs of fearful behavior, you have gone too far, too fast. Adjust the circumstances so that your kitten is comfortable.
- Physically disciplining your kitten by hitting, flicking its nose, or rubbing its face is a mess. These techniques may negatively impact its future relationship with people.
- Jeopardizing your kitten's safety by exposing it to other animals with the appropriate safety measures in place.