



## Kitten 101: Early Development

Early development is as key for your new kitten as it is for any new member of your family. The most early days of a kitten's life are among the most influential. Take this opportunity to learn with your kitten as they grow.

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### Early Development



To any cat enthusiast, kittens are an irresistible, adorable, sweet perfection in a furry little ball. But when adopted, their angelic appearance can soon be replaced by the realities of owning an energetic young kitten. There are ways to prevent this adoration from turning into frustration. Kittens are certainly different in many ways from their counterpart companions...puppies. However, they equally benefit from early training and a consistent, loving approach.

Gaining a better understanding of the feline species and providing for your kitten's needs with appropriate training and structure will ensure a smoother introduction of your new kitten to your family.

### Things to Do

- Locomotion
  - At 6 to 7 weeks of age kittens can perform all the gaits associated with adult movement...give them opportunity to challenge themselves.
- Eyesight
  - Though kittens are born with the eyelids closed they will open ~2wks. Keeping them as close to their mother during this period will avoid any challenges during this period.
  - Games that require your kitten to visually track on object are good exercises as their eyes begin to open and foster their natural instincts.
- Hunting
  - Hunting is a natural feline behavior. However, limiting your kittens access to prey by keeping them indoors will keep them safe and reduce this behavior from dominating.
- Weaning
  - This process should start at about 4 to 5 weeks and is usually complete by 7 to 8 weeks. Give them time and space.
- Social Play
  - Kittens are extremely observant learners (copycats!)
  - Social play should be fostered around 4 weeks and will transition to predominantly object play ~7 weeks.
  - Provide lots opportunity and tools for play.

### Things to Avoid

- Locomotion
  - Allow your kitten to explore at their own pace and avoid exposing them to situations that prematurely test their locomotive skills.
  - Breakable items should be moved out of reach.
- Eyesight
  - Avoid attempting to influence your kitten opening his/her eyes prematurely. The kitten will open their eyes when ready, ~2wks.
- Hunting
  - Cats with outdoor access often wear bells, as an early warning system for would be prey. Ensure that your kitten / cat is equipped with a break away collar to prevent being unable to free themselves.
- Weaning
  - Kittens should not be removed from their mother until weaning process is completed...meaning the kitten can and is regularly eating solid cat food.
- Social Play
  - Kittens learn from play as much as any animal. As observant learners, and natural predators, it is important to employ as many positive reinforcement techniques as possible. This solicits the positive response and reduces the risk your cat sees you as an object for hunting play!