



# Caring for your **Cat**

A guide to caring for,  
understanding and getting  
to know your cat from kitten  
to senior

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## Every cat is unique

Every cat is unique and will provide years of friendship and entertainment for the whole family. Cats are probably the most self-reliant pets of any you may have considered. Love, attention, understanding and a slightly whimsical attitude on your behalf will be appreciated and is normally returned in kind.

However tempting, before going out and purchasing that adorable little kitten in the store window, it would be wise to do some research. Cats generally live 15 to 20 years, some may live longer. Determine whether you and your family can handle such a long-term commitment before you get one. Remember – even though cats appear to be independent, they still need attention, exercise and play to stay healthy and strong.

We hope the information contained in this booklet will help you get off to a good start and provide some guidance along the way. It is, nonetheless, impossible to cover all of the potential questions that will arise throughout the stages of your cat's life. Talk with your veterinarian and your pet store specialist or breeder whenever necessary. Don't hesitate to take advantage of the many interesting books available on the subject of kitten/cat behavior and ownership.



## Coming Home

Your new kitten should be able to eat on its own, so he should be no younger than eight weeks old when you take him home. Newborn kittens should be left with their mothers for 6 to 8 weeks to allow preliminary training. During this period, he will learn how to use a litter box as well as social skills.

Be sure to have validated your new kitten's vaccine and health status prior to bringing him home. This is particularly important if he will be joining another pet in the household. Often, it is preferable to have the original owner provide the initial vaccines before you become officially involved. This allows a grace period for you to search out a veterinarian you feel comfortable with. Generally, talking with friends and neighbors is the most reliable way to start your investigation.

Kittens can be furry balls of energy, especially in a new and exciting environment. All are curious and will likely inspect every nook and cranny in the house within the first few days. It is important to "kitten proof" the

immediate environment. Kittens will play with anything that moves, dangles or shines. Often they will chew and swallow things you deem totally unappealing, therefore house proofing includes a long list of considerations.

Electrical cords, pins, needles, shoe laces, wool (especially strands), string, thread, thumb tacks, small fridge magnets, loose jewelry and all other objects of a similar nature can and have been chewed and/or ingested at one time or another by an overzealous feline.

Open cupboards (even closed cupboards without a latch), fire places, warm dryers, knick knock shelves, open balconies, open vents, closets and anywhere else you can imagine he would go are certain to attract immediate attention. Be prepared.





Finally, all kittens like to eat plants and chew on grass. Most plants are harmless, but a few should be avoided. Check with your veterinarian and make a mental note to keep the appropriate plants out of reach.

## Things You Will Need

### Water Bowls

Fresh water should always be available for your kitten and a good quality ceramic or stainless steel bowl is highly recommended. The Catit Drinking Fountain and Drinking Dome are excellent ways to provide your kitten with cool, fresh water.

### Leashes, collars and harnesses

Many kittens object to collars or harnesses at first and can put up quite a fuss. The earlier they get used to one or the other, the better. The same is true for leash training. Many cats will learn to go for walks, if started early. Harnesses are probably the best idea if you intend to walk your cat or tether him or her in the backyard. If not, collars are still a must, so that identification tags can be worn. Even indoor cats occasionally escape outdoors. If the need for a flea collar arises, your cat will be more accepting if he is used to something around his neck.

All collars should have a “break away” feature as kittens and cats tend to squirm and roll if they catch their collar on anything. The breakaway feature allows them to free themselves without injury. Avenue offers a complete line of collars, leashes, harness and tie outs to meet your needs.

### Litter box

Kittens instinctively like to bury their waste. This makes litter training extremely easy. There are several types of litter boxes to choose from.

For kittens an open concept plastic litter box with a splashguard (not a hood) and simple non-scented clay litter are recommended. Some kittens may be discouraged by unusual smells or unfamiliar doors or flaps.

Clean the litter box on a regular basis. Partial cleaning is okay, as long as the entire box is cleaned (with simple soap and water) at least twice a month, as the plastic will absorb some odor.



### Scratching posts

Kittens regularly sharpen their claws and instinctively scratch furniture, appliances, etc. There are several good types of commercially available scratching posts. The best are wrapped in carpet, coiled rope

or other enticing fabric. If you decide to make your own, observe your kitten's behavior and cover a piece of two by four with whatever fabric your kitten seems most attracted to. Put this on a solid base, add a safe dangly toy and possibly some cat nip and make it easily accessible.



## Things You Will Need

### Feeding

Cats have unique nutritional needs. Avoid giving them human or dog food. They need complete and well balanced food designed specifically for them.

Nutrience provides excellent dry and canned kitten products for your new pet. Cats are by definition carnivores, or meat eaters. To nutritionally service this need, Nutrience employs only the highest quality chicken meal, hydrolysed chicken, duck meal and dried egg in their foods. Of equal importance, Nutrience employs the most recent technological advancements to create its formulations, so as to do everything possible to help prevent the development of bladder crystals in your pet's urine.

Nutrience provides optimal levels of minerals, calcium, phosphorus and magnesium in the more specific components to struvite crystals. Additionally, urinary acidifiers in Nutrience's dry formulations provide for specific preventative urinary pH levels.

### Feeding Tips

1. Always start with a high quality dry kitten kibble designed to reduce the risk of bladder problems such as Nutrience Transition Kitten Step One or Nutrience Junior Kitten.
2. Try and use canned food only as a treat or for very young kittens.
3. Keep food and water bowls in areas where the kitten can be away from any canine members of the family.
4. Plenty of fresh water is a must, even though you may not notice your kitten drinking a lot. The Catit Drinking Fountain and Drinking Dome are great ways to provide your cat with a constant supply of cool, fresh water.
5. Kittens may play with their food & water, so safe, secure dish styles are essential.

6. Small, frequent meals are better than singular large meals.
7. Remember your kitten and/or cat is an individual. Feeding instructions are only guidelines. Quantities will need to vary with activity levels & specific weight gain patterns.
8. Supplements are not necessary when feeding your cat a high quality food such as Nutrience.
9. Treats should be kept to a minimum. Use them as intended...as a reward.
10. Milk should be monitored. Excess is not recommended and often may result in diarrhea if lactose intolerance exists.

## Things You Will Need

### Bowls and Dishes

Every cat should have its very own set of bowls or dishes. They should be shallow and allow easy access to food and water. They should also be wide enough so that whiskers don't touch the edges. Always have plenty of clean drinking water available. Change the water several times a day. Cats are very fussy about drinking "stale" water. The use of either the Catit Drinking Fountain or Drinking Dome is an excellent way of providing your cat with a constant supply of cool, fresh water.

Dishes or bowls made of materials such as hard plastic, earthenware, porcelain and stainless steel are ideal because they're easy to clean and retain no odors.







## Things You Need to Know Social Interaction

Upon arriving home with your new kitten, expose him to the greatest number of people right away and try to avoid negative interaction with strangers.

Remember, kittens are feline babies. Often in the excitement of bringing home a new friend, parents allow the children to overdo the early interaction. This can lead to the kitten scratching or biting a child in frustration or to the kitten wearing itself out to the point of risking illness. Control the playtime and exuberance of both the kitten and the kids, particularly over the first week.

Teach children to be gentle and respectful. Show them how to properly pick a kitten up by supporting the chest and rear end with one hand on either location. Never encourage handling around the neck or excess force when hugging.

Kittens may become fearful and react accordingly. If a kitten seems overly rough or aggressive, consult your veterinarian or breeder. This trait should be closely

inspected prior to selection. Your initial instincts should be trusted, particularly if young children are involved.

If appropriate, designate responsibilities for care of the kitten to older children. Pet ownership can be a learning experience. Do not allow your expectations of either your children or your pets to take the place of common sense.

Kittens are exuberant by nature. It is probably unwise to introduce a kitten to a home with a free flying bird. Kittens may unintentionally injure budgies or smaller parrot species simply in play.

Many kittens have an instinctive suspicion of dogs. If you need to introduce your kitten to a canine, be sure to allow an initial period of exposure where one pet is placed behind a closed door. Then, when the time is right, introduce the two animals to the same room making sure the canine is under control with a leash. If the initial contact seems subdued, you are off to the races. If not, keeping the kitten in a wire cage in the

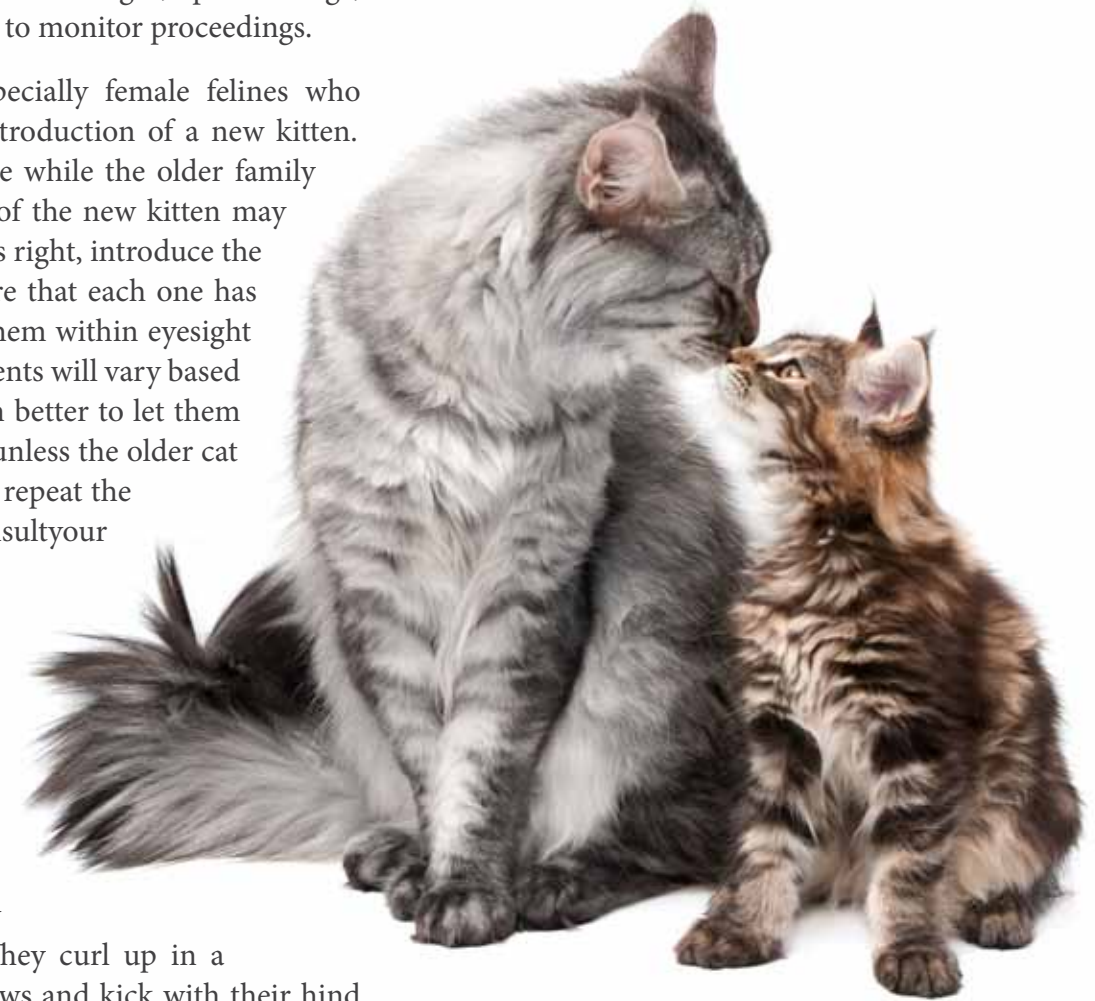
same environment but safely out of reach for a period of time, can help. When the time seems right, open the cage, but only when you are around to monitor proceedings.

Most cats are territorial, especially female felines who can get quite upset by the introduction of a new kitten. A couple of days of avoidance while the older family member adjusts to the scent of the new kitten may be necessary. When the time is right, introduce the cats at meal time, making sure that each one has their own bowl and to keep them within eyesight but apart. Your next requirements will vary based on initial responses. It is often better to let them sort things out on their own, unless the older cat is excessively aggressive. If so, repeat the above as necessary and/or consult your veterinarian.

Kittens enjoy playing; it is one of their most endearing qualities. They will continue playing regardless of your intervention and sometimes in spite of it. Subsequently, being prepared is essential. Kittens enjoy play fighting with siblings. They curl up in a ball, grasp with their front paws and kick with their hind legs. Without a sibling, your hands or your ankles often pay the price.

## Things You Need to Know Training and Eliminating Annoying Behaviour

The initial interactions you have with your kitten will set the ground rules for the rest of his life. While certain general principles apply, common sense and a willingness to adapt are essential in early dealings with your new pet. We suggest a positive reinforcement technique. This technique involves reward as well as disguised punishment. Coming when they are called involves treats, affectionate scratching of the ears (and other favorite areas), and even a few minutes of playful interaction.







It never hurts to use the sound of a can opener (preferably electric) to get a cat to come.

The effectiveness of this technique should give you some insight into your cat's way of thinking. Furniture can be saved by using scratching posts garnished with catnip or other toys. To prevent kittens from jumping on counters, design the following harmless trap - attach a string to a piece of paper and dangle it over the edge. The resulting chatter will either stop the jumping or provide an exciting new game.

## Things You Need to Know Litter Box Basics and Sleep Time

Most kittens are naturally inclined to use a litter box, but if accidents do occur, show the kitten the proper place to go. Do not punish the cat for mistakes. Stains and odors should be removed promptly to reduce any additional accidents (S.O.X. is an odor and stain remover that actually eliminates the organic matter in urine and feces).

It is important to make sure that your kitten is physically capable of getting into the litter box. Small kittens may need a low-sided pan for a week or so until he can handle a full sized adult litter box.

Make the litter box accessible and move it by little increments to a more appropriate location over a period of time. Once the kitten is accustomed to a routine, you can make any changes you want, one at a time. It is ultimately good advice to try a hooded, odor muting litter box, but leave the original nearby for a while, just in case. Once you are sure your pet likes the new style, remove the old container. Similarly, if you are changing litter types, it is a good idea to have the original type within reach. Kittens and cats can get set in their ways and may not always appreciate your preferences, regardless of their potential benefits.

Clean your litter box regularly. Depending on the type of litter box, clean it every seven to ten days. Remember to keep a very small amount of soiled litter around to add it to the new mix after the box is cleaned.

New kitten owners should be aware of a parasite possibly passed to pregnant women via cat feces called toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis is not a major concern especially if litters

are cleaned daily. However, it is probably a great excuse to have hubby or the kids do the dirty work for a while. If the need is unavoidable, use disposable gloves and wash your hands well after cleaning the litter. Feel free to ask your veterinarian for more information on the subject.

## Sleep Time

Kittens tend to prefer the security of an enclosed area in which to bed down. A cardboard box, layered with a sheet, blanket or towel, a store bought cushion preferably with sides or a hand crafted wooden box are all good suggestions. More than likely, though, your kitten will find a spot in a spare bedroom (or one not so spare), in the laundry room, or in a comfortable chair/sofa and simply claim it as his own. It is often simpler to cover the furniture than to try and have a battle of wills with a feline. Cats tend to be nocturnal. Expect your kitten to sleep all day and experience intense periods of play late in the evening or early morning.

## Things You Need to Know Health Care

Most cats and kittens are best served by regular visits to your veterinarian. The vet will be more than happy to demonstrate routine procedures such as trimming nails, cleaning ears and matted hair, if necessary. The first visit should be at or around eight weeks of age when an initial vaccine and fecal analysis will be done. The latter is done to rule out common intestinal parasites.

The first visit will also include a check for ear mites, fleas, any respiratory viruses or other illnesses and a good overall health examination.

Before visiting a vet, be sure to have some idea of the nature of your cats eating and drinking patterns, whether stools are normal or loose, whether he is scratching excessively and whether there have been any changes in behavior (emotional or physical).

All these things will be questions your veterinarian may ask. Similar monitoring will service you well throughout your relationship with your cat.







Regular visual checks of your cat can help spot early signs of illness. Telltale signs include withdrawal, listlessness, unresponsiveness, sneezing, eye discharge, rapid breathing, unsteady balance, diarrhea, excessive fur or hair loss, red spots or ulcers in the mouth, and mites or brown discharge in ears.

### First Aid

Think of your kitten or cat as a child. If the condition would warrant concern in a child, take immediate first aid precautions and call your veterinarian.

Burns, which might stem from spilled hot water, can be treated by toweling off any excesses and applying cold water compresses. Electrical burns or any injury resulting in cardiac arrest and/or shock can be helped by the “gentle mouth over nose puffing of air” procedure. Cats suffering from smoke inhalation will benefit from this procedure.

Firm, controlled chest compression just behind the point of the elbows (the front legs) may also be necessary.

Most episodes of apparent choking are associated with hairballs (Essentials Care Hair Ball Remedy helps prevent fur balls). However, if your cat is pawing frantically at its mouth and gagging, he could have a foreign object lodged in his teeth or throat. You'll need to take a quick look and if the cat objects or is frantic, try and bundle him gently but securely in a towel and open the mouth.

To do this, place one hand over the cat's head and eyes and position your fingers at the base of the jaw. Use your other hand to lower the bottom jaw. Have a friend or family member shine a light down his throat for a better look. If feasible, remove any offending agents. In all emergency cases, take your kitten directly to your veterinarian and have someone call ahead to let them know when you'll be arriving.

Unless after hours, your vet will understand and accommodate your emergency.

It is advisable not to medicate at home. Certain products may not be suitable for pets and may cover up symptoms your vet may require to make a correct diagnosis.

## Things You Need to Do

### Grooming

Cats often groom themselves to stay clean. As a cat licks itself, dead fur often gets swallowed and can cause stomach and intestinal problems.

It's important to comb or brush cats on a daily basis to get rid of loose fur. Therefore, it is a good idea to get your kitten used to being combed out. Long haired cats in particular are prone to matting caused by oily skin or plant burrs initiating a tangle. Consult a groomer or pet store associate for the appropriate tools. A comb or a doublesided comb, one with a larger weave is essential. A slicker brush can also be useful. Look for the full line of Le Salon and Le Salon Pro grooming products at your local pet retailer.

Routinely removing loose hair, doesn't guarantee your kitten will be able to avoid hairballs if he grooms himself a lot. Very often, your pet may throw up a well-compacted mass of hair. This can look distressful, but don't worry. When hair is not vomited it will often pass through to the bowel and cause constipation. Using Essentials Care Hairball Remedy once weekly or as required can be a good idea (especially with long haired cats). Other helpful products include Essentials Care Wipes for cats which provide a safe and gentle way for you to keep your pet clean without water or rinsing. All of the ingredients are non-toxic and harmless to pets even when they groom themselves.

For a cat, their sense of hearing is essential for their well-being. A regular ear care routine is one of the best ways to ensure healthy ears. The Essentials Care ear products have all been tailor-made to aid in maintaining the health of your pet.

We all give special consideration and care to our faces, and it should be no different for our pets. Tears can stain the coat of your cat (this is especially true on lighter colored animals) leaving dark marks on its face. These stains can be removed by using Essentials Care Stain Remover. The





carefully formulated product safely and gently cleans away tear stains, as well as other protein stains such as saliva and mucus.

A nail trimming routine needs to be established to help keep your cat comfortable and to prevent any damage that may be caused by lengthy nails. If you trim your cats' nails at home, a styptic product (such as Essentials Care Styptic Powder or Gel) is a must have.

### Fleas and Ticks

Fleas are a serious problem in many areas in North America. Ticks and other parasites can be an annoyance at the very least or can cause serious health problems. Many communicable diseases and parasites can be transmitted by insect bites or ingestion.

To prevent and combat these problems, pay special attention to you cat's coat during high-risk seasons (spring and fall). Prevention is key. Once you have determined that your cat has fleas or ticks, a proper insecticide treatment for him and his environment is required.



### Things You Need to Know

#### Spaying and Neutering

Pet felines should definitely be neutered or spayed. This helps to control domestic populations and minimize the number of unwanted felines who inevitably end-up being euthanized. The ideal age to neuter males or spay females, generally speaking, is between 6 to 8 months and should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Neutered males have much less tendency to roam. Their urine is less offensive, resulting in less litter concerns and, if neutered, males have less of a tendency to fight with neighborhood bullies. This latter advantage can save expensive repair bills at the vet.

Male cats often mark their territory by using their urine scent. This behavior, called "spraying" is reduced, but not necessarily eliminated by neutering. Female felines have a nasty habit of howling when they are in season and this can occur all too often when you are sleeping. Spaying your pet is a rational decision, unless you desire kittens.



### Things You Will Need

#### Traveling with Your Cat

Cat carriers are essential for trips to the cottage, to the vet's or for convenience purposes. Most carriers are fine for kittens, but remember you may want to use it again when he is much larger. Also, if you want to travel with your pet, the carrier should be able to accommodate a temporary litter box.

Wicker products, in general, may be the least recommendable, as kittens may decide to chew on wicker and even consume small pieces. If you select wicker, be aware and consider cleaning difficulties. Plastic types are probably best suited for longer trips and style should be governed by ease of entry, ease of cleaning, safety and size.

Smaller more portable "tote bag" style carriers are excellent for short trips to the vet, but are more difficult to clean. Some felines do suffer from stress and/or motion sickness, a concern you should discuss with your veterinarian. For long trips, make sure your travel compartment can facilitate a litter box. Remember to

take along extra litter, as you will not want to travel far with soiled litter. It is not advisable to feed your cat unless the trip is to be over five or so hours. Boarding kennels are a reasonable alternative for kittens and cats. Most require up-to-date vaccines. Some cats do not adjust well to boarding, especially if dogs are involved. For this reason, look for a "Cats Only" location. If ever this is too much of an event, consider "in house cat sitters".

Larger communities will have professional bonded cat sitters who will visit your home on a prearranged schedule. This is pricey, but your house has the advantage of providing your kitten with the reassurance of familiar surroundings. If you plan to travel out of the country, be sure to predetermine any and all special requirements. You will require current vaccine records and a health certificate, at the very least. Both are available through your veterinarian.





## Things You Need to do

### Play and Exercise

Although an outdoor creature by nature, domesticated cats are quite content to stay indoors. This doesn't mean that they wouldn't enjoy going out, but consider the dangers. Cats who are allowed to roam freely can be struck down by motor vehicle traffic. Other perils include contracting infectious diseases, tapeworms, accidental poisoning, and injuries caused in fights with other cats or animals. Cats can also annoy neighbors by damaging gardens, and they can kill important native bird species.

However, it's clear that cats can enjoy some fresh air and sunshine. If you're going to let your cat out, supervise him, or use a lead and harness.

A fenced-in yard can help for short play sessions. If you elect to use a harness and lead, be patient. Start by letting him wear the harness indoors for a few sessions before attaching the lead. Follow your cat, don't lead him, for the first few times outside.

Always supervise a harnessed cat in case it gets tangled or hangs itself accidentally. Never leave it alone. Avenue offers a large variety of nylon harnesses and leads in many different styles and colors.

If you want to keep your cat indoors at all time, make sure he gets regular exercise and play to burn off energy and relieve boredom. Two cats are helpful in such a situation. Catit has a wide range of toys to amuse and exercise your cat. Play with toys of any kind should always be done under supervision. Pets are not meant to ingest parts of the toy.



## Conclusion

Cats are precious creatures that enhance one's life.

Respect them, take good care of them, and above all, love them.

Their love, affection, and attention will be your reward.

