

# Basics of Raising Kittens into Adult Cats

Reinforcing good habits early will make it easier to exercise proper care as your kitten grows.

## Socialization

Studies have shown that kittens need to be socialized to be comfortable with strangers later in life. Expose your kitten to other people and animals early and often. But first be sure your kitten and other pets are healthy and up-to-date on vaccinations and parasite protection.

## Grooming

Practicing good hygiene early will make grooming and veterinary visits easier in the future and will also reduce the chance of hairballs. You should brush often and examine your kitten's ears, eyes, nose, mouth and paws regularly.

## Litter Box Training

Place your kitten in the litter box whenever you think an accident may be imminent. If your kitten has an accident, wipe up the waste with a paper towel and place the waste in the litter box. These responses will teach your kitten to associate the litter box with waste.

Note: Do not use an ammonia-based household cleaner to clean up accidents, as ammonia imitates urine and invites further misuse of the area.

## Spaying/Neutering

Around 6 months of age, or as directed by your veterinarian, your kitten can be spayed or neutered. If your kitten is a male, at about 6–12 months you may notice him urinating to mark his territorial boundaries. If you wait until this stage to neuter him, he may continue to do this even after surgery.

## Disciplining

Keep a spray bottle or small water gun handy to correct bad behavior. Be careful not to spray your kitten in the face. You should only use the spray bottle if you actually catch your kitten in the act of doing something wrong. Other methods of correcting bad behavior include:

- Adding double-sided sticky tape anywhere you want your kitten to avoid (e.g., tabletops, counters).
- Applying a small amount of cayenne pepper or hot pepper sauce to electrical cords or houseplants to discourage your kitten from chewing.
- Introducing a scratching post to divert your kitten's attention from furniture and curtains.