



**Petplan**®

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You  
and your  
kitten

# The First Days

Health • Behaviour • Training • Advice • Support

Every pet deserves





# Welcome to your kitten's first days

The joy and rewards a young cat can bring are immeasurable. But a new kitten also brings challenges and responsibilities.

When you become a Petplan customer, we'll be here to support you through the highs and lows with tailored guides, emails and videos packed full of tips and advice.

This is the first guide and it contains useful expert information for your kitten's early days and beyond – settling your little cat in and kitten-proofing your home, litter-training, good nutrition, plus keeping your kitten healthy and happy.

Happy reading, and enjoy life with your new kitten!

To find out more about your 4 weeks free cover, call  
**0345 077 1934**

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## Expert advice



**Dr Brian Faulkner, MRCVS**

Brian has worked in more than 250 veterinary practices and holds several academic positions.



**Nicky Trevorrow, Cats Protection Behaviour Manager**  
Registered Vet Nurse and Animal Behaviour & Training Council (ABTC) Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist.



# New arrival

Your kitten's here! Pet behaviourist **Nicky Trevorrow** explains how to welcome your new pet and ensure the first days go smoothly.

That wonderful moment when you finally bring home the kitten you've been dreaming about has arrived! But what next? You wouldn't be the first person to find it all a little daunting. Don't worry, there's plenty you can do to make the first few days run smoothly – for you and your new pet.

## Settling in

The trick to helping your kitten settle is to make sure he or she feels safe and to let them take everything at their own pace. Generally, cats like to feel in control, and if you let that

happen, your new kitten will be far more relaxed in their new home.

## Give your cat space

Prepare a quiet room or special space for your new kitten. You'll need to position their bed, litter tray, water and food bowls in appropriate places around the room. Cats don't like to eat where they drink, and they never toilet next to where they eat. If possible, raise their bed up a little from the floor. Try to make sure it's somewhere nice

WELCOME

and quiet (so not next to the back door where people might be going in and out a lot).

Provide entertainment in your kitten's room too – a few cat toys, such as a scratching post and something three-dimensional they can climb, like an empty set of shelves.

Cut two holes in adjacent sides of a cardboard box to give your kitten somewhere to hide that has an entry and exit point to give your kitten somewhere safe to hide. Avoid leaving your kitten alone with a toy with string attached, as they can get in a tangle.

## Welcome home

On arrival, leave the kitten in your travel basket with the door open so they can venture out when ready. You don't need to stay in the room with your new pet. Put some food your kitten is used to eating in a bowl – but don't worry if he or she shows little interest at first.

## Meet the family

Cats aren't naturally social beings and their capacity to accept new people can diminish rapidly. Bring other family members into the room fairly early on, and let your kitten choose to approach them. It's best if they're sitting down →

## KITTEN PSYCHOLOGY

Let your kitten feel in control – he or she will like this, and it will make them feel far more relaxed.

## Prepare your home

- Block up gaps so your kitten can't get stuck behind a fridge or cooker.
- Screen off open fireplaces.
- Nail down any loose floorboards.
- Close toilet lids.
- Put all cleaning products and medicines away.
- Close all windows and doors.
- Put electric cables out of reach.
- Keep hot liquids well out of the way.
- Move valuable ornaments from surfaces.
- Remove any potentially poisonous plants or cut flowers.
- Keep small objects that could be swallowed out of reach.



## What your pet needs

- Kitten food
- Litter tray and litter
- Cat carrier basket
- High-sided cat bed and blanket
- Toys
- 3D environment – eg, shelves for climbing on
- Grooming equipment
- Lots of hiding places, like cardboard boxes
- Food and water bowl
- Rigid, upright scratching post

(ideally on the floor) and holding a tasty treat, so that your kitten can walk on and off them. All handling should be very gentle and quiet and the kitten should never be held on to, but should be free to walk away. Look out for signs such as a twitching tail or widening eyes, which are your kitten's way of saying he or she has had enough. Then it's time to let your cat go off and do their own thing.

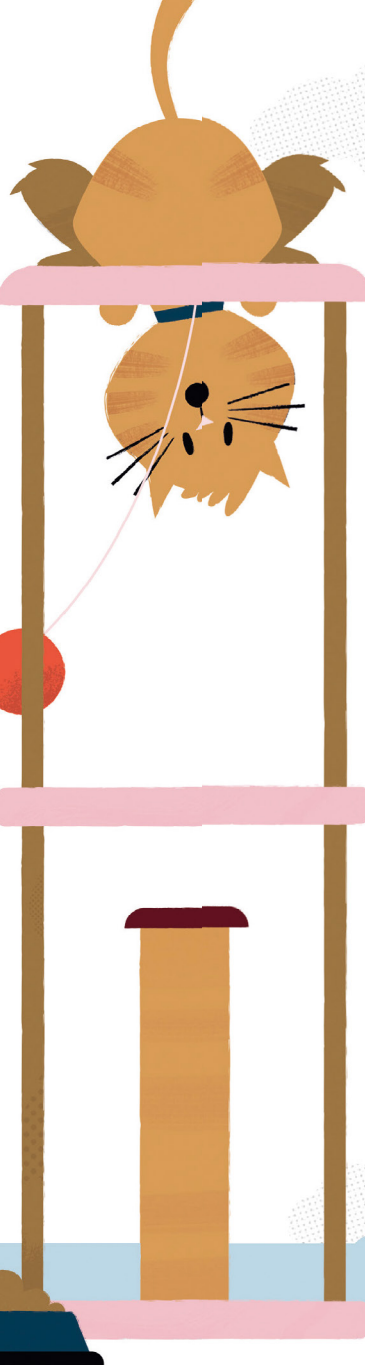
It is important, though, that your kitten gets used to being handled as part of a normal relationship with humans. You should also make sure he or she can tolerate a degree of intrusive contact, such as having paws, teeth and ears examined, so that if this needs to happen in a crisis situation, your kitten is used to it. Do this by offering little treats while you examine him or her.

### Existing pets

When you are introducing your new kitten to existing pets, make sure that they all have a safe place to go – for the kitten this might be a hideaway box. Never put any of your pets in a cage for the introduction because this creates stress.

### Creating a bond

Kittens all come with their own personalities and temperaments, and some will want more interaction than others. Get down at floor level



and play with yours. If he or she isn't interested, then don't persevere; although cats are not naturally social animals, the fact you provide them with food and water will often be enough to form a bond. And remember, never wake up your kitten to play – young cats need to sleep a lot! If your kitten runs to hide when you go into the room, don't try to coax him or her out. Instead, remain in the room but get on with your own activity, so that your kitten can get used to your presence.

### Setting the routine

It's important to set up rules and routines early on and not build up false expectations in your kitten. If you let him or her sleep in your bedroom, be prepared for broken sleep as your young cat might imagine that you're there for nocturnal games!

If you're not planning to let your cat sleep on your bed, then establish that rule from the start. Also set routines for when your kitten goes outside, when he or she is kept indoors and when it's playtime.

As long as you feed your kitten throughout the day, feeding can be left out of the routine. A puzzle feeder is great for engaging your cat's brain as well as feeding them.

### CAT DREAMS

If you let your kitten sleep in your bedroom, you may have broken sleep – your pet might imagine you want to play instead!

## Answer me this

**Q My kitten won't use the litter tray**  
**A** Is the tray in a nice, quiet place? Your kitten might like a bit of privacy for doing its business. Using the same type of litter and tray the adoption centre or breeder used may help him or her feel more at home.

**Q My kitten's always scratching me**  
**A** Could you be playing with your new kitten too long? Tail-flicking is a sign they've had enough. If you encourage play by drumming your fingers on the furniture, the kitten might mistake them for a toy and pounce. Use a toy instead.



# Toilet troubles

This essential guide will ensure your kitten is fully litter-trained and help to remedy any problems later on



Eventually you may choose to teach your kitten how to litter outside, but in the early days he or she will use an indoor litter tray. These tips will help establish good habits.

## Clean the litter tray

It's essential to wash trays regularly with cat safe disinfectant, and to replace soiled litter with a fresh batch at least once a day.

## Type of litter

Ask your adoption centre, breeder or previous owner what kind of litter the kitten is familiar with. If you want to change to a different brand, do so gradually over at least a week. Most kittens and cats prefer a soft, sand sized litter about 3cm deep so they

can dig in it. Avoid using scented litter – most kittens find this off putting, and picking up on their own scent in the litter can reassure them that this is the right place to go.

## Type of tray

Give your kitten an open kitten sized litter tray, but ensure you replace it to a full sized adult tray when they are older. Avoid using the covered trays for kittens as they can be difficult to get in and out of.

## The right location

Place the kitten's litter tray in a safe, quiet, accessible place away from their food and from noises, such as washing machines or televisions. Also position the tray away from other pets and children.

## Time to settle

The presence of other cats in the household can be a source of anxiety for kittens, particularly when it comes to using the litter tray. Be patient while they adjust and take introductions very slowly.

## Give encouragement

If you see your kitten scratching at the floor or withdrawing behind a chair, pick them up and gently place them on the litter.

**FACT: Most kittens use a litter tray consistently by six to eight weeks.**



# What's for dinner?

Here's how to ensure your kitten has a healthy diet, right from the start

- ✔ **Little and often** Kittens have tiny stomachs, so feed them at least three to four small meals a day, at regular intervals, to help digestion.
- ✔ **The right food** It's vital your kitten gets the correct nutrition for their stage of development, so choose a well-balanced, age-specific food. A combination of wet and dry food is often the best.
- ✔ **Gradual change** For the first few weeks after bringing your kitten home, give him or her the same food as they were homed with. Any dietary changes, such as moving to a complete and balanced kitten food, should be introduced gradually.
- ✔ **Access to water** Ensure your kitten has plenty of fresh water at all times. Don't put the water bowl next to the food bowl, as cats naturally avoid water near food. Some cats dislike the chlorine in tap water – if so, offer bottled or rain water.
- ✗ **What to avoid** Avoid artificial additives such as flavourings, colourings and preservatives. Some foods meant for humans can harm kittens, such as raw fish or meat, grapes, raisins, bones, spicy food, liver, milk, cheese, chocolate, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms and avocado.

# Next steps

Preventing illness is much easier than treating an unwell pet. Follow the advice of vet **Brian Faulkner** to keep your kitten healthy

## Vaccinations

These are due when your kitten is nine to 12 weeks old and are essential for protecting your kitten from cat flu, feline enteritis and feline leukaemia virus.

## Microchipping

Microchipping your cat became law in June 2024; not doing so could lead to a potential fine. Microchipping your cat gives them the best chance of being identified and returned to you if they're lost or stolen. Sadly, eight out of 10 stray cats\* handed to adoption centres in England aren't chipped, making it difficult for them to be reunited with their owners. If you move or change your contact details, remember to update your records on the microchip company's database. \*According to *Cats Protection 2018 data*.

## Worming

All kittens are susceptible to picking up numerous types of worms. Treatment should be carried out every fortnight until they are 12 weeks old, and then once a month until they are six months old.

## Flea treatment

Cats easily pick up fleas when they're out and about, and a heavy infestation can lead to skin damage. Use a veterinary-recommended preventative treatment, most of which come as spot-on pipettes. Your house will need treating, too.

## Neutering

As well as preventing pregnancies, neutering guards against problems such as mammary cancer and womb infections. In males, neutering reduces...

the desire to roam, spray and fight. Most vets recommend neutering when your kitten is 2kg.

## Dental care

Looking after your kitten's teeth helps to prevent gum disease, a condition that can lead to more serious issues. Not many cats will tolerate brushing, so keep your pet's teeth healthy with a good-quality diet. It's also important that your cat has annual check-ups.

## Regular check-ups

Take your kitten to the vet soon after getting them home. As well as checking that he or she is healthy, your vet can give you appropriate care advice and prescribe worm and flea treatments that aren't available over the counter. As a pet owner, you will also need to be aware of the common conditions that can affect your cat now or later on in life (see right). Regular vet check-ups can spot these or any other early signs of illness and ensure your pet has the right treatment and care straight away.

## TIPS FOR STRESS-FREE VET VISITS

We asked clinical animal behaviourist **Nicky Trevor** for her advice on making check-ups a calmer experience for both you and your pet. She suggests:

- Getting your kitten used to their carrier by leaving it out for a few days before you head to the vet and placing their favourite blanket or soft toy inside.
- Limiting your time in the waiting room, and trying to opt for a vet practice with a special quiet, cat-friendly area.
- Giving your kitten a treat after every check-up to form positive memories.

## Common cat illnesses



### 1 Gastrointestinal disease

Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea, reduced appetite and weight loss. If these occur, seek your vet's help.



### 2 Respiratory tract conditions such as cat flu and asthma

Blocked nose, poor appetite, fever, sneezing and coughing are symptoms of cat flu. Asthma can cause your cat to cough or wheeze. In both cases, see your vet.



### 3 Cystitis

Can be caused by stress or bladder stones and crystals. If you notice any changes in your cat's toilet habits, speak to your vet.



### 4 Heart disease

A heart murmur or abnormal heart rate or rhythm are signs of early heart disease. Your vet can advise on treatment.



### 5 Kidney disease

Signs include increased thirst, weight loss and urinating more than usual. Kidney disease can be managed providing your cat gets prompt medical attention.

### CHECK IT OUT

Regular visits to the vet are vital for your kitten's health and wellbeing.



## Your 4 weeks free cover

**Your 4 weeks free cover has  
been activated**

Now you can relax, knowing that your kitten is protected. To find out more about your free cover, call us on 0345 077 1934.

**It's important to choose the  
right insurance policy**

After your 4 weeks free cover comes to an end, it's important to think carefully about your decision when looking for new pet insurance.

Not all pet insurance is the same, and the policy you choose can impact the veterinary care that's available for your kitten. So it's essential to ask the following questions when you're shopping around for pet insurance:

- Do you cover dental illness and injury?
- Are there any additional limits within the Vet Bills cover?
- Will I pay more if I claim?

Do you want to find out more about your 4 weeks  
free cover? Call our expert team on

**0345 077 1934**

Every pet deserves

