

Is a New Kitten Right for You?

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Kittens are cute, cuddly balls of fun, and they grow into cats that can be wonderful companions for years to come. However, kittens can also scratch your furniture, dig in your plants, climb your curtains, and insist on playing all night when you want to sleep! Before you bring home a new kitten, make sure you are prepared for the responsibilities and lifestyle changes this charming little creature will bring into your life. Careful consideration now can help prevent frustration and an unhappy ending later.



Before you bring home a new kitten, ask yourself the following questions:

Do I have enough time for a kitten?

While it is true that a kitten will not need to be walked or taken out to go to the bathroom the way a puppy will, a kitten will still require your time every day. You will need to feed it and give it fresh water. The litter in the litter box will have to be scooped daily and changed every few days. Cats are social creatures, and they need interaction. Spending time playing with your kitten many times during the day and especially before bedtime will provide some of the attention it needs, and also help to burn off some of that abundant energy. Hopefully, this will also make the kitten tired at bedtime, and less likely to get you up in the middle of the night. Many kittens, although not all, like to be petted and may like to sit on your lap and cuddle. As you spend time with your kitten, you can begin teaching him to use a scratching post ([Scratching on Furniture](#)), and start some basic training. Kittens that get a healthy amount of attention and play time with their owners are much less likely to develop behavior problems later.

Do I have the patience to have a kitten?

Kittens have a tremendous amount of energy and curiosity, coupled with extensive athletic ability. They learn about the world around them by exploring, and they exercise their developing muscles by running and leaping and pouncing. While this is all part of normal, healthy kitten behavior, it can also be frustrating – when your kitten climbs your new curtains, attacks your ankles for the hundredth time, or knocks over the antique vase on your mantel. Most kittens become less active after about a year of age, but it may take a lot of patience on your part until your pet reaches that point! Young children may not have this much patience.

Is everyone in the family ready to have a kitten?

Young children may not understand that a kitten is a living being, that it is unacceptable to be rough with it, and that it must be left alone while it eats, sleeps or uses the litter box. Many children are mature enough to have a kitten by kindergarten age, but some are not.

Will the kitten fit in with the pets I already have?

Not all adult cats and/or dogs will welcome a new kitten. If you already have an adult cat, expect a transition period of at least a month as the older cat adjusts to the kitten. Keep in mind that some breeds of dog may see a small kitten as something to be hunted as prey. Be sure to introduce the kitten slowly to the resident cat or dog, and do not leave them alone until you are certain they will be OK together. A kitten will likely be fascinated by any birds you might have, and this can be very stressful for a bird, even one in a cage.

Am I prepared to spend the money it costs to take proper care of a kitten?

There is no such thing as a 'free' animal. Although you may not have to buy the kitten, there are other costs involved in being a responsible owner. See [Cost of Owning a Cat](#) and decide if you are willing and able to spend the money.

Who will take care of the kitten when I go on vacation?

While it is true that many cats do just fine on their own for one or two nights with adequate food and water, you will need a more definite plan for when you go on vacation, or in case of an emergency. Check out local boarding facilities or pet-sitters (prices, services included, etc.) in advance, before you need them. If you plan to enlist family or friends, make certain they are willing before you bring your kitten home.

Will my home be safe for a kitten?

Kittens love to explore small spaces, jump up onto high shelves and perch on narrow ledges. Candle flames can be fascinating to kittens, as can open clothes dryers and washing machines. For your kitten's safety you will need to keep toxic chemicals and plants out of reach, as well as electrical cords. Toilet lids should be kept down. If you are thinking this sounds like childproofing your home, you have got the right idea! Consider whether you are willing and able to make these changes before you bring a kitten into your home. For a more complete list, see "[Making Your Home Safe for a Kitten](#)."

Will my home be safe from a kitten?

You may smile at this question, but kittens can be surprisingly destructive. Scratching furniture and/or carpet, climbing curtains and comforters, digging in plants – these are just a few of the normal activities of an active kitten. While it is true

that most kittens can be taught to use a scratching post, and to tolerate having their nails trimmed, you may have to take protective action in many areas of your home. Houseplant soil may need to be covered with small rocks or a layer of screening. (Of course, any toxic plants should be removed altogether.) Certain rooms may need to be kept off-limits. Fragile or valuable items may need to be put away until the kitten is older and hopefully less active. Be certain you are willing and able to make these changes before you bring home a kitten.