

New Kitten Quick Start Guide - By Petstore Kenya

You have decided to get a kitten! Congratulations! Cats make awesome family pets, kittens in particular are very lovable. It is important to know what is involved before you bring your new family member home. To help you plan the next few months here is a guide which will outline what you need to take care of your new kitten and provide you with some basic guidelines on kitten care.

Most Kittens should not leave their mothers until they are at least 8 weeks.

1. New Kitten Supplies

- Cat bed: pick a sturdy cozy bed that can easily be lined with blankets / Shukas that are easily washable – it does not have to be fancy. If possible, bring a blanket from it's first home for familiarity and comfort.
- Bowls: Get 2 shallow bowls, one for food and one for water. These can either be stainless steel or plastic.
- Collar & ID Tag: It is recommended that at 5 months your kitten can start wearing a collar. Having a collar with a bell can be useful for tracking the whereabouts of your kitten.
- Grooming Supplies (Shampoo, brush/comb): It is important to groom your kitten from an early age, brushing gently and praising them during their grooming.
- Scratching Post: This important to keep their claws sharp, exercise and stretch their muscles. Using positive reinforcement, it will prevent them scratching your furniture.
- Toys: You engage the kitten's predatory instinct with toys, it useful to have a few of the following toys to help with their development. You can use simple things like ping-pong balls, empty card boxes or tubes, plastic rings, mice toys or teaser toys such as feathers on wand. It is important to introduce new play items to keep them engaged as they can get bored.
- Cat Litter Box: Most cats use a litter box instinctively as they naturally try to expel bodily waste in dirt or sand, some cats have been trained to use a human toilet!

2. Proof your Home

- Protect your kitten and save your belongings!
- Kittens are fascinated by anything that moves and things that they can move around with their paws. That includes wires, knick-knacks, bathroom items and tablecloths. Some such items can be dangerous for kittens; others are easily broken.
- Kittens love to climb and will climb anything they can. They also have tendencies to slip through open doors and windows, so it is important to ensure that these are closed whilst they are in the room.
- Remove any valuable or fragile items from shelves which they could knock over.
- They need to sharpen their claws and may enjoy ripping up your favourite carpet and even clothes, it is probably best to put loved items away whilst you train them.
- They have their noses close to the floor and love to put things in their mouths, bits of rubbish are no exceptions, so keep their areas clean to avoid them choking. Invest in covered garbage baskets as they tend to knock these over allowing them access to litter.
- Keep food covered, Kittens have an excellent sense of smell and some foods are harmful to them such as chocolate.

- A number of household plants and flowers are poisonous to cats, so please check what flowers can be placed in your home.
- Ensure your house is free of rodent traps and poisons (rat, roach and ant). If ingested can kill your pet. Ensure you use animal safe insect repellent too.

3. Kitten Food

- From 8 weeks your kitten should have started eating solids and by the time you bring them home they should be eating canned food or kibble.
- Options like Spectrum Kitten Starter are designed for a kitten's small mouth and teeth. A good starter product supports healthy growth with highly digestible proteins such as dried egg and hydrolysed chicken liver, specific levels of vitamins and minerals for optimal growth and immune boosters to ensure wellness
- After 16 weeks you can move them to "Kitten" food such as Spectrum Kitten38, Reflex Kitten or Bonnie Kitten.

4. Feeding Guidelines

- Check the packaging of your starter product to determine how many grams of the food are required per day based on the weight of your kitten. Take this amount and divide it into 4 feedings.
- Stick to 4 feedings per day until 16 weeks of age and as you see fit you can divide the daily allowance to 3 feeds a day until the cat is 6 months of age. From 6 months onwards we recommend feeding twice a day.
- Always have Fresh water available for the kitten – change it daily

5. Treats

- Treats are not required at this stage but if you do decide to give treats choose the most natural treats you can find. Things like meat may be natural but it will take some time for the kitten stomach to digest meats properly so take it slow.

6. What not to feed your kitten

- Cow's milk and other dairy products: Most cats are naturally lactose intolerant and dairy products can cause them upset stomachs, vomiting and diarrhoea. Use Kitten specific milk formulas as suggested by your vet.
- Chocolate: This is toxic for cats and can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, rapid breathing or heart rate and seizures.
- Raw Eggs, meat and fish: You may think that as an obligate carnivore and the hunting skills cats have, that is ok for them to eat raw meat or fish, but these may contain dangerous E.coli and Salmonella, exposing them to these pathogens can be fatal. Raw eggs contain avidin and can prevent your cat from consuming Vitamin B biotin, giving them skin conditions and a dull coat.
- Dog food: You may have a dog at home and there are chances that your cat will sample their food, it likely will not harm them but cause them malnutrition. Cats need Taurine, Vitamin A and Arachidonic acid. A cat kibble should contain the right levels to keep them healthy.

- Onions and garlic: Whether raw, cooked, powdered or dehydrated, garlic and onions can damage a cat's red blood cells, and can also cause nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. Remember that most cats are curious creatures, and love to investigate food that has been left out on countertops or in sinks. If your cat can easily jump on a table or counter, make sure to keep dangerous or toxic foods well out of reach – sealed behind a closed pantry door or kept in a high-up cabinet.

7. Cat Litter Boxes

- If you have more than one cat, the general rule is to have a litter box for each one. That way none of them will be prevented from going because it is occupied!
- There are different types of litter such as clumping / non clumping clay, silica and various vegetable fiber litters.
- Most cats prefer fine grained litters, providing a 'softer touch'. "Clumping" litter general tends to be more popular.
- Constant switching of litter brands could result in your cat not using the litter box.
- Keep their litter boxes somewhere they have privacy. Avoid noisy areas.
- Keep it far from their food and water.
- If you have different levels of the house, try to keep a litter box on each level.
- Clean the litter box twice a week, if you clean the litter box daily, you may only need to replace the cat litter every 2-3 weeks. Not cleaning it regularly could lead to your cat getting an infection.
- If the depth of the litter is more than 2 inches the cat may not use the litter box.
- Cats, unlike dogs, do not need to be trained in using the litter box, instinct will generally take over. If your cat is not using the litter box, consider using an attractant spray or contact your vet as the maybe a medical issue.

8. Vaccinations / Vet / Flea & Tick prevention

- The Breeder you got the kitten from should give you a history of any vaccinations already done and give you a vaccination certificate. If not select a vet and ask them to give you the plan for when your kitten will need vaccinations
- Ask your vet about the schedule for deworming
- Consider a natural or electronic flea / tick control solution until 8 weeks of age, then from 8 weeks you can select something like Bravecto or a chemical free product like Tickless Pet.

9. Spaying or neutering

- To protect your female cat from pregnancy, she will need to undergo a simple operation (before she turns four months old) known as 'spaying.'
- Your boy cat will need to get 'the snip.' This will deter your male cat from territorially spaying in your home, and also from getting into fights.
- The operation will also protect your pets from a disease called FIV (the feline equivalent of HIV). Prior to the operation, your cat will be given an anesthetic and once home, they will need to stay in for a short while, as advised by your vet.