



**HUMANE SOCIETY**

of sonoma county

Santa Rosa & Healdsburg

## Things you should do with your kitten that will make your life with them as an adult cat much easier!

Kitten season here is starting to get serious- we've adopted out a few kittens so far this year, and many more are to come! Of course new kitten adopters will be excited to spend tons of time with their new kitten (or kittens, if you read my post about the advantages of adopting a pair and decide to get two. However, there may be some things you wouldn't think to do with your kitten that can make life go a lot smoother as they grow into an adult cat.

### **-Get them used to a carrier (and maybe even a car)**

I suggest you invest in a larger-sized carrier that you will be able to use as your kitten grows into an adult cat. Leave it out for your kitten to explore; make it a fun place by tossing toys inside, or leaving catnip or treats for them to find (though keep in mind that kittens tend to not have a reaction to catnip until they are 6 or so months old). You can even feed their meals in the carrier if they're already comfortable with it. Once they've learned to love their carrier, practice closing the door, so they'll know that even if they're in the carrier and the door shuts, it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be in there for a long time! If you're feeling ambitious, you could also work on desensitizing them to car rides once they love their carrier; start by just carrying it around your home briefly, then to the car and back, then sitting in park with the engine on, and progress to a drive around the block. Take things slow and always reward them and you'll be able to reduce the stress of future vet visits or moves (not to mention make it MUCH easier on yourself).



### **-Feed them yummy snacks with a syringe**

At one point or another over the course of their life, your cat is probably going to need to take some kind of medication. Many cats will turn their noses up at meds in food, so you may have no choice but to use a syringe or a 'piller' tool to get your cat what they need. If you desensitize your kitten to these tools while they are still young, you're going to have a much easier time medicating them in the future! Once a day or so, use a syringe or piller to give them a yummy treat- you could start by just smearing wet food on the tool and letting them lick it off, and progress to putting watered-down wet food or wet food treats in the actual syringe

and slowly depressing the end while letting them lick from the tip. Doing this won't mean they'll willingly eat yucky-tasting medication, but it can make them willingly come to you when you're holding a syringe, and you will have a much easier time medicating them!

**Ensuring every animal receives protection, compassion, love and care.**

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Feline Behavior: (707) 542-0882 x 204, [catbehavior@humanesocietysoco.org](mailto:catbehavior@humanesocietysoco.org) | [HUMANESOCIETYSOCO.ORG](http://HUMANESOCIETYSOCO.ORG)



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### **-Get them used to having their paws touched/nails trimmed**

With kittens, it's relatively easy to just hold them and trim their nails- but as they get bigger this might become a much more difficult task. If you make it a positive experience, they're going to be much more likely to hold still for their manicures as an adult. Start by just gently touching their paws while they're eating their favorite snack, and then get them used to having you push gently on the pads to extend their nails. Trim one nail at a time- even just one per day- and give them a treat or other reward after.

### **-Be very strict about not letting them play with your hands**

While it might seem cute to have a kitten play-bite your fingers, it's suddenly not so cute when they are bigger and are applying more pressure. You should never encourage your kitten to play by wagging your fingers or wiggling your toes under a blanket. Use wand toys, kicker toys, and more to let them get out their urge to pounce, bite, and scratch, and if they ever turn their energy towards your skin, immediately redirect them towards an appropriate toy instead. The most common cause of cats or kittens trying to play with human hands or feet is a lack of playtime- the more you play with them with toys, especially wand toys, the better!

### **-Harness train them**

More and more people are taking their cats for walks- why not be one of them? You can keep your kitty extra-safe while still giving them the bonus enrichment of the great outdoors! While it's possible to train adult cats to accept harnesses, it's much easier if you start the process when they are kittens! Go slow and don't just throw a harness on them immediately; get them used to the harness as an object that just EXISTS first, then have them get used to it touching them, having it slipped over their head, having them wear it for only a minute at a time, and so on, offering treats or another reward every step of the way.



### **-Get them used to strangers**

Especially if you just have one or two people in your household, you should try to expose your kitten to other people as well. Invite friends and family over to interact with the kitten after they've had time to settle into their new routine in your home. A kitten who is socialized with multiple people as they grow is much less likely to be skittish and fearful as an adult. Particularly if you have a kitten who's on the shyer side, make sure not to do too much too quickly. Ease them into all kinds of different experiences, and make it a fun, positive time!

We know you'll have fun doing new things with your kitty, and they'll bond with you even more and can grow up into an adult cat who is adaptable and ready for anything.

For more information about cat behavior and training, check out our Caturday blog by Feline Behavior Program Manager Saffron Williams: [humanesocietysoco.org/owner-support/caturdays/](https://humanesocietysoco.org/owner-support/caturdays/).

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