

Kitten Socialization & Training

Socialization is the process of preparing your cat to enjoy interactions and be comfortable with other animals, people, places and activities. Socialization should begin during the kitten's **“sensitive period” which is between 3-9 weeks of age.**

Socialization tips:

- Create a socialization plan specifically for your cat to prepare him or her for life in your household. Plan exposure to the animals, individuals, environments, activities and objects that will be part of his or her new life
- Provide regular positive and diverse experiences to encourage your cat to enjoy new experiences without becoming fearful or aggressive.
- Provide praise, play and treats to reward engagement.
- Allow the cat to withdraw if he or she is uncomfortable.
- Move at a pace appropriate for your cat's personality
- Well-managed kitten socialization classes are a good way to socialize a kitten within the sensitive period.
- Continue to reward your cat for calm or playful responses to social interactions throughout his or her life
- For cats with special behavioral needs, develop a plan with your veterinarian and/or animal behavior expert
- Kittens that have not been fully vaccinated should not be exposed to unvaccinated animals or potentially contaminated environments.

<i>The goal is that the kitten has positive experiences, not neutral or bad ones. It's important to watch the kitten's response and note what it is and to also give treats to help ensure the exposure is a success. Here's a checklist that can help you.</i>	<u>Progress</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Response to the person, object, environment or handling</u>
	Needs Work	1	Reactive/Aggressive: growl, hiss, scratch, bite or yowl
		2	Avoid: Struggle, hide, try to get away, won't approach, or hesitant to approach
		3	Freeze: Holds still(but not eating), non-exploratory, moving slowly or acting sleepy when they shouldn't be tired, crouch close to floor
	Going well	4	Calm, relaxed, explores the object or environment, playful, focused on the food or toy
		5	Calm, relaxed, explores the object or environment, playful, even without food or toy

Class of Socialization	Score
<u>Handling</u> - checking and wiping ears, checking mouth and eyes, holding feet and trimming nails, pinching skin, poking skin with a capped pen, holding kitten on back, pulling collar or other body parts, wiping body with a towel, putting on harness or collar	
<u>Unfamiliar People</u> - women, men, children standing and playing, toddlers walking and squealing, infants crawling and people running by	
<u>Unfamiliar Cats</u> - friendly adult cats and friendly kittens who play well	
<u>Other Animal Species</u> - dogs and any other types of pets you may have	
<u>Vet Hospital Prep</u> - crate, car rides, metal surfaces, vet clinic	
<u>Scary Sounds</u> - thunder, fireworks, babies, kids, alarms, dogs barking, doorbell ringing, traffic, construction, vacuum and sirens	
<u>New Environments</u> - suburban neighborhood, residential city streets and commercial buildings	

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