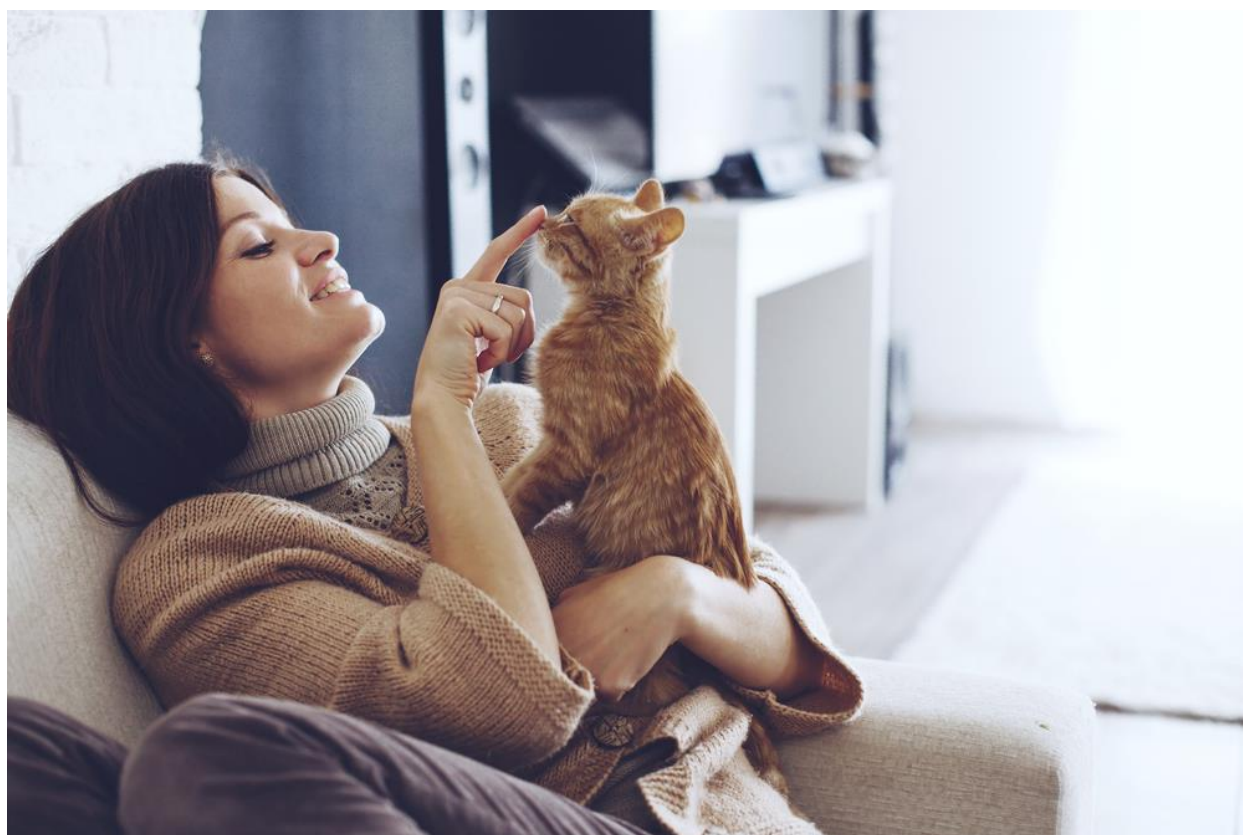


# How to Take Care of a Kitten: The Complete Guide

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 [www.allaboutcats.com/how-to-take-care-of-a-kitten](http://www.allaboutcats.com/how-to-take-care-of-a-kitten)



Nothing is more adorable than a fluffy little kitten. Kittens are cute, for sure, but they can also be quite a handful. If you've never raised a kitten before, you may be wondering where to start.

**Being a pet parent means providing for your pet's basic needs in addition to being a friend and companion.** For kittens, this means providing a healthy and high-quality diet as well as routine veterinary care. You'll also need to prepare your home for your new kitten and take the time to play with and bond with it.

If you're considering bringing a new kitten into your home, do your research to learn how to raise a kitten. Keep reading to learn everything you need to know about kitten nutrition, behavior, and health.

## Understanding Your Kitten's Nutritional Needs

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If you want your kitten to grow up healthy and strong, you need to feed it a high-quality diet. But what exactly are your kitten's nutritional needs?

**Here is a quick summary:**

- Kittens should start eating solid food around 4 weeks and **should be fully weaned off their mother's milk and onto kitten food by 7 or 8 weeks** of age.
- A kitten's diet should be nutrient-dense and fairly high in calories – kittens need roughly 2 to 3 times as many nutrients and calories as adult cats.
- Kittens are obligate carnivores which means that their bodies are designed to absorb nutrients from animal-based foods – a kitten's diet should be primarily meat-based.
- **A kitten needs plenty of healthy fats in its diet, ideally from animal sources** like chicken fat and salmon oil – fats provide a concentrated source of energy as well as support for skin and coat.
- Kittens should be fed several times a day to provide the energy they need to grow and develop properly without becoming overweight.

Now that you know some of the basics of kitten nutrition, let's dive a little deeper.

The first thing you need to know about your kitten's nutritional needs is that cats are obligate carnivores. **Dogs, on the other hand, are scavenging carnivores which means that most of their diet should be meat-based, but they are capable of digesting plant foods when other food is scarce.** Cats, however, are designed to derive nutrition from animal sources so, while some carbohydrates are okay, most of your kitten's diet should come from meat.

In terms of your kitten's specific nutritional requirements, it needs at least 30% of its nutrition to come from protein and at least 20% from fat. Again, these nutrients are best from animal sources because these are the most biologically valuable for your kitten. Click [here](#) to read about the best kitten food on the market today

## So, what kind of protein and fat is best for kittens?



**Here are some key points to keep in mind:**

Protein provides the building blocks for healthy muscles and animal proteins are the best for kittens because they are complete proteins. **A complete protein is simply a protein that contains all of the essential amino acids your kitten needs.** Good examples of protein options for kittens include poultry like chicken or turkey, meats like beef or lamb, and fish like salmon. You may also see game meats and other unique proteins like duck, venison, rabbit, and more.

Fat provides your kitten with a concentrated source of energy – each gram of fat contains 9 calories versus 4 calories per gram for protein and carbohydrates. Animal-based fats like chicken fat and salmon oil are best, though your kitten can also get fat from protein sources like meat and fish. Plant oils can provide omega-6 fatty acids to balance your kitten's omega-3 intake but remember that animal-based fats are more biologically valuable.

Most commercial kitten and cat foods contain carbohydrates. While there are some benefits to that, protein and fat should always be the focus. **Carbohydrates can provide energy and fiber, as well as essential vitamins and minerals,** just make sure there aren't too many plant-based carbohydrates in your kitten's diet. The most digestible carbohydrates for kittens are starchy vegetables and cooked grains.

In addition to proteins, fats and carbohydrates, your kitten also needs vitamins and minerals in its diet. Most commercial kitten foods contain synthetic supplements to ensure balanced nutrition. Just know that certain forms of these supplements are more

biologically valuable than others. Chelated minerals are the best because they've been bound to protein molecules, which improves their absorption.

**The best place to start in picking a high-quality diet for your kitten is to choose a recipe formulated specifically for kittens.** These will contain premium animal protein, healthy animal fats, and minimal digestible carbohydrates with nutritional supplements for balance.

## Tips for Kitten Behavior

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Kittens are little balls of energy and curiosity. As cute as they are, they have a way of getting into trouble and sometimes they do things you don't want them to do.

The best way to keep your kitten from destroying your house is to make sure it gets plenty of exercise and that means active play time! **Playing with your kitten helps it work off some of its excess energy and it's a great opportunity for the two of you to bond.** Try to work several short play sessions into your daily routine, and before you know it, you and your kitten will be the best of friends.

Here are some simple ideas for playing with your kitten:

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- Buy a fishing-pole toy or make your own by tying a small toy to a piece of string and a stick – move the toy around and get your kitten to chase it.
- **Use a laser pointer to make your kitten run around the room** – you can also buy an automatic laser pointer toy for times when you're busy or not home.
- Offer an assortment of small, plush toys that your kitten can wrestle with and toss them around for your kitten to chase.
- **Roll a small ball around for your kitten to chase** – it may find the ball more appealing if it makes noise, so look for one with a bell inside.

Playing with your kitten is fun until you catch a sharp kitten tooth or a pointy claw. Even if your kitten doesn't mean to hurt you, it can sometimes happen. So, what do you do?

In addition to playing with your kitten to work off energy, you should also take the time to teach it how to play nice. First and foremost, **don't let your kitten play with your hands or feet because that will just teach it that it's okay to bite or scratch you.** Second, make sure your kitten has plenty of toys to play with, so your fingers are less tempting. If your kitten is trying to bite or scratch your hand, press a plush toy against its belly and let it wrestle with that instead.

Another way to discourage bad behavior in kittens is to use a spray bottle. **If your kitten does something you want to discourage, give him a quick spritz with a spray bottle.** The water won't hurt your kitten, but it will startle it enough to stop the unwanted behavior and may discourage it from repeating it.

## Health Tips for a New Kitten

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While feeding your kitten a high-quality diet is the most important thing you can do to support its health, you should also find a good veterinarian and start making regular visits. It's a good idea to **take your kitten to the vet within a week or two of bringing it home so you can get started with vaccinations** and other basic health protocols.



When you take your kitten to the vet for the first time, he will probably recommend deworming. This is because most kittens adopted from shelters are born to stray mothers, which means **there is a high risk that they contract intestinal parasites from their mother or from the shelter**. Fortunately, deworming is simple, and the treatment is very effective.

In addition to deworming your kitten, you will also need to have it vaccinated. Here is a quick overview of the first three vet visits for kittens:

- **First Visit (6 to 8 weeks)** – Fecal exam for intestinal parasites, blood test for feline leukemia, vaccinations for rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia, and chlamydia.
- **Second Visit (12 weeks)** – Examination for parasites, first vaccine for feline leukemia, second vaccinations for rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia.
- **Third Visit (vet's recommendation)** – Second feline leukemia vaccine, first rabies vaccine.

After your kitten has gotten its vaccinations, you may not need to see the vet again until it reaches 6 months of age. This is when most veterinarians recommend having a kitten spayed (for females) or neutered (for males).

#### **Having your kitten spayed or neutered provides the following benefits:**

- Spaying a female kitten before her first heat cycle greatly reduces the risk of cervical cancer and completely eliminates the risk of ovarian cancer.
- **Neutering a male kitten helps reduce aggressive and territorial behavior** in adulthood.
- Unspayed females that go into heat may try to escape the house in search of a mate – spaying the kitten will help keep it safe.
- Both male and female cats sometimes exhibit spraying behavior to mark their territory – spaying and neutering may reduce this behavior.
- **Having a female kitten spayed greatly reduces the risk of breast cancer** which is fatal in about 90% of the cats who contract it.
- Spaying female kittens and neutering male kittens reduces the risk of unwanted litters because females won't go into heat and males won't be able to impregnate a female.

Most shelters will spay or neuter a kitten once it weighs two pounds or more, so don't feel

like you have to wait until your kitten is 6 months old. In fact, **some female kittens go into heat early**, so talk to your vet about the best time to do the procedure.

Once your kitten completes its vaccinations and has been spayed or neutered, you'll only need to see the vet once or twice a year for a regular checkup and for booster vaccinations. If you're considering purchasing a cat insurance plan you should read [this guide](#) first.

## Simple Tips and Tricks for Raising a Kitten



In addition to learning the basics about your kitten's nutritional needs, behavior, and health, there are some other tips and tricks you might find helpful. Here are our top tips for raising a kitten:

- **Take the time to kitten-proof** your home before you bring your kitten home – this means putting away potentially harmful things like electrical cords, poisonous houseplants, medications, and small objects.
- **Create a safe space for your kitten when you first bring it home** – you'll want to **keep it in a small room for a day or two until it gets used to things** then slowly expand its range.
- Avoid leaving your kitten alone for too long – not only will your kitten get lonely, but it's also more likely to get into trouble if there's no one around.
- **Make sure you use a kitten-safe litter and litter box** – look for something that is dust-free and made with natural materials that won't irritate your kitten's sensitive paws.
- **Provide plenty of toys and scratching surfaces** – if you provide your kitten with **scratch pads and scratching posts**, it'll be more likely to scratch them and not your furniture.
- **Start grooming your kitten early so it gets used to the treatment** – spend a few

minutes brushing your kitten a few times a week and use different kinds of brushes to get it acclimated.

In addition to following these simple tips, you may want to consider training your kitten as well. Cats are intelligent animals and **they can be trained to respond to simple commands and to perform tricks**. If you start early and use food rewards, you may be surprised what you can teach your kitten to do.

## Final Remarks

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Raising a kitten is a wonderful and fun-filled experience, though it certainly comes with its challenges. The more you learn about raising a kitten before you bring one home, the better off both you and your kitten will be. So, take the time to read our advice and then put it to use. Good luck!