



Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital

HELPING YOUR NEW KITTEN SETTLE IN

Going to a new home can be daunting for even the boldest of little kittens, as they may be leaving their mother and siblings for the first time.

It is best to pick a single room where the kitten can be kept for the first few weeks to allow them to adjust to their new surroundings. Such confinement can also help with toilet training, avoiding the risk of accidents around the rest of the house.



Consider the following when choosing a suitable kitten room:

- **Avoid full-length curtains (or temporarily pin up), as kittens may run up them and perch at the top.**
- **Check for possible hazards such as fireplaces or poisonous plants and make it secure as possible – remember kittens can get into very small spaces!**
- **Keep any hazardous substances out of the way and secure any cupboards where they are stored as kittens are very curious!**
- **Remove any breakable object from shelves and window sills.**
- **Keep windows securely locked.**
- **Position the litter tray in a discreet corner of the room with the food bowl at the opposite corner. The water bowl should be placed well away from both the food bowl and litter tray.**
- **Place an igloo bed or cardboard box on its side with a fleecy blanket for the kitten to hide in if feeling shy or insecure.**
- **A cosy padded washable bed should be placed in a quiet area away from food and water bowls and the litter tray.**
- **Position a kitten scratching post nearby the resting area (remember this will need replacing with a taller one as the kitten grows).**
- **Have some toys available for playtime. Any toys with string attached should only be available under supervision to prevent harm to the kitten.**

A kitten pen or large dog crate can be a very useful purchase, which can be moved around the home to more social areas as the kitten settles in. It should have plenty of room for a bed, food and water bowls, litter tray and toys. It also provides an ideal safe enclosure for the kitten to be kept in at night or when left alone – remember kittens are very curious and can get into all kinds of mischief!

The first few days

If possible, bring some bedding home with the kitten from the breeder / rescue, to provide a familiar object for the kitten when everything else is new. This can be placed in the kitten's cardboard box hide or bed. The first 24 hours should be a calm period for adjustment to its new surroundings, so any children should be made aware to leave the kitten alone initially. Have the kitten room prepared in advance to allow them to settle with minimal disturbance. When you arrive home, place the basket on the floor and open it to allow the kitten to come out and explore in their own time.

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Offer some food, water and a litter tray within the room or crate so the kitten can associate it as its den, and after the kitten has found everything, you may leave them alone for a while. It is quite normal for kittens to not show much interest in food at this stage. It is also useful to maintain the same litter substrate that the kitten has been used to initially, which can be changed gradually once completely settled in.

It is important to spend time getting to know the kitten to enable bonding, but interaction should take place when the kitten is naturally active and responsive. Remember, kittens need their sleep when they are young – even more so than adult cats – so never wake a kitten to play or give affection. If the kitten is receptive then play, but don't persevere if not interested or anxious, as they have a lot to take in at the beginning. Spending time in the kitten room and sitting at floor level will appeal to the kitten. Don't coax them out of a hiding place, let them come to you in their own time. After a couple of days, handle the kitten throughout the day for short periods of time to encourage socialisation, and ensure young children are supervised and don't over-handle the kitten.

Setting the rules

Try to establish rules and routines for the future from day one. Often owners feel sorry for their new kitten and think they should have them close by at night, especially at the beginning, but this can lead to nocturnal games and excitement, resulting in a continuously disturbed night's sleep for owners! Cats are naturally active at dusk and dawn, but kittens can soon adjust to the owner's lifestyle. The kitten can be put to bed, in a cosy, warm and secure environment until you wake in the morning – ensure the bed has high sides to keep out draughts and a low front for easy access.

Feeding your kitten

Find out what the kitten has been fed at its previous home to continue feeding what they have been used to initially, as sudden diet changes combined with the stress of moving to a new home, can cause stomach upsets. If you want to change the kitten's food, do a gradual switch over a week by mixing with the previous diet until only feeding the new diet. Choose a good quality commercial "complete" kitten food to ensure your kitten receives all the correct nutrients for its young life-stage, and feed little and often (*at least 4 meals per day*) as kittens have small stomachs so cannot cope with large meals. Never give your kitten cow's milk as cats do not tolerate lactose very well so can result in diarrhoea. Ensure that fresh drinking water is available at all times.

Toilet training

Cats are very fussy about their toilet habits, but kittens will usually have learnt to use a litter tray from copying their mother. Show your kitten where the litter tray is and place them in the tray after waking and after meals, or when the kitten is sniffing, scratching or beginning to crouch as though ready to eliminate! If using a crate then the litter tray can be placed in there, otherwise place it in a quiet but accessible corner away from any disturbance. Ensure that food and water bowls are placed away from the litter tray as the kitten may be reluctant to use it if too close to vital food and water resources.



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