

Kitten-Proof Your Home

Like a curious child, your kitten wants to explore every inch of your home. Make sure it is safe.

Ron Bast

The sleek jaguar slinks gracefully through the jungle, eyes focused warily, looking for danger on every side. Ahead, through the tangle of detergent bottles and mouse poison, she sees her prey... Its a jungle in there, even though she's a young Siamese kitten prowling under the kitchen sink rather than a large jungle cat working the forests of the Amazon. But the dangers she faces in many homes can make a real jaguars life seem almost tame.

Humans know the dangers of our increasingly complex, often chemical-dependent, existence. We read labels and shudder when we realize we can't even pronounce most of the ingredients, much less know what they can do to us. We keep our kids away from the nastiest potions and handle them ourselves only with care.

But are we paying enough attention to the dangers our kittens face in our homes?

Watch that brave kitten at work: She uses all her senses, including her sense of taste, and that's the one that can get her into trouble the fastest. Stuff that we wouldn't allow within a mile of our lips may seem like the Nectar of the Gods to her. She can't differentiate between harmless liquids and killer chemicals.

Her sense of smell, acute as it is, can lead her astray. She balks at the smell of a peeled orange, but will drink antifreeze like a teenager guzzling cola. Curiosity also drives her to stick her nose into places we humans have long forgotten, places often full of the residue of rat poison, lawn chemicals, discarded razor blades and other vicious stuff we've abandoned there.

And then theres electricity. We know how it works and what to avoid. She only knows what fun it is to bat, chew and tease those tasty cords attached to everything in the house.

To keep children safe from the machinations of the modern world, you put bad things up high, lock them up down low, or put them in the garage and keep the door locked. Piece of cake.

That strategy won't work with a kitten. As you'll soon find out, she can go as high as she wants. She also can find her way into cupboards with seemingly secure latches. And she's small enough to slip unnoticed through almost any door, window, crack or niche.