

Dear Tabby

**Experts answer your kitten's questions in terms that humans can understand.**

*Marty Becker, DVM, and Janice Willard, DVM*

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom. That's not a car commercial. That's me, a ball of fur flying around the house looking for things to play with. My new owners get mad when I break things or climb the curtains. What can be done to help us?

In the wild, your mama would teach you to hunt, and you and your siblings would learn social skills. You would spend most of your waking hours on the go, playing and exploring. "Although everyone talks about how 'low maintenance' cats are, the truth is they can get bored just like everyone else, and a bored kitty can end up in trouble," said Clea Simon, author of "The Feline Mystique: On the Mysterious Connection Between Women and Cats." Young kittens especially have a lot of energy to burn off, and your owners don't realize that they should be playing with you. Then you'd be so tuckered out that you'd fall asleep and do no damage. Plus, they're missing out on all the fun of having a kitten. "[Your owners] can even be using a clicker to teach you tricks," Aronson said. Another solution might be for your owners to consider adopting two kittens. Then you will have a live-in playmate. If your humans don't want two cats, then they must make up the difference by providing toys and pretending they're cats.

My siblings had sharp teeth and it hurt when they bit me hard. And they really complained and wouldn't play with me when I bit hard. But now I live with humans and they laugh like it's funny when I bite hard. Does that mean it's OK to bite humans?

"They might be laughing now, but they'll be crying when you're older," said Simon. "It's not OK for you to bite humans, but they're the ones who are misbehaving. They should be teaching you not to bite, by giving you nice toys to munch on, or even gasp leaving you alone when you get a little bitey."

Because cats are predators with a sharp and powerful bite, it is important for you to learn at an early age to be gentle when playing. In a cat colony, you learn this by playing with your siblings, mother and other juveniles and adults. If you bite too hard they give instant feedback like a yowl, swat upside the head or running away that this is not cool. These lessons will stay with you for life. Some scientists even think your baby teeth are so sharp to ensure you will learn this important lesson. But if you are living with humans during this critical learning period, it is up to them to teach you to follow the sage old advice to "play nice."