

Kitten Ownership From A to Z

Let this alphabetical list guide you through the process of acquiring and caring for a new kitten.

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G - Grooming Regular grooming should include brushing and/or combing your kitten's coat and clipping its nails. Not only does this keep your kitten looking good, but it also helps reduce hairballs and scratching problems. Some breeds need ear cleanings and/or baths. Your veterinarian or local groomer can tell you how to properly groom your cat.

H - Health Your kitten's health is your responsibility. Take your new pet to the veterinarian immediately for an overall exam and to schedule vaccinations and spay/neuter. Altering your pet will cut down on behavioral issues and protect your pet's health. An indoor-only lifestyle also will help lengthen your kitten's lifespan and eliminate emergencies such as animal attacks, car accidents, poisoning and abuse.

I - Introductions Go slow when introducing a kitten into a household with children and/or pets. The new environment alone, without adding other animals and excited young children, will probably overwhelm your kitten. Give your new pet some time in its own space, such as a bathroom or guest room, to become familiar with new scents and noises. Let pets sniff each other under the door and introduce human family members slowly, one at a time. Your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist can also provide guidance for smooth introductions.

J - Juggling responsibilities Kitten care can involve the entire family, but never make a child solely responsible for pet care. Each family member can be responsible for a particular chore, such as feeding, litterbox duty and keeping the water source clean and filled.

K - Killers Common household dangers include human painkillers, insecticides, chocolate, coffee, salt, citronella candles, fertilizers, swimming pool treatment supplies, antifreeze, liquid potpourris, rodent bait, electrical cords, ribbons, batteries and toxic cleaning products. Poisonous plants include poinsettia, aloe, sweet pea, onion, azalea, oleander, avocado, rhododendron, most lilies, caladium, morning glory, daffodil, gladiolas, holly, hydrangea, hyacinth, tulip, iris and yucca.

L - Litterbox When it comes to the litterbox, cleanliness is essential. Experts recommend providing one box per cat on each level of your home, with one extra. Scoop the litterboxes at least once a day. Each week, completely empty the litterboxes, wash them out and refill them with clean litter.