

Normal Cat Behavior

To prevent problems:

Keep a squirt gun or bottle handy. A squirt of water in the face deters most kittens from doing things they shouldn't do, especially jumping up on counters or playing too aggressively, and it doesn't hurt them.

Spend lots of time playing with your kitten so his energy is used up more constructively. Drag a string around the house or tie an object to a string on a pole and wave it around while watching TV. **DO NOT** play with your kitten by wiggling your fingers or toes - this encourages biting.

Do not hit or strike your kitten for being naughty. This will only frighten or anger him and frequently leads to biting and clawing behavior. Punishment is the least effective training method for cats.

Never force a kitten to stay in your lap if he or she wants to get down. **Do not grab** at your cat or scare him, or he may learn to bite. Rough and tumble play also encourages aggression, so play gently, using a toy and not your fingers.

Confine your kitten to one room when you aren't home, one that has no plants or dangerous objects. Swallowing or choking on small objects is very common in cats and kittens. Beware of things such as rubber bands, pencil erasers, needles and thread, small toys, metal objects such as paper clips, scraps of fabric, earrings etc. Anything smaller than 1" diameter can probably be swallowed and needs to be kept out of a kitten's reach. Don't give your kitten string or yarn to play with! These are among the most common and deadly of intestinal obstructions.



Provide at least one scratching post for your cat to use. Even declawed cats like to stretch and knead their paws. Rubbing catnip on the post will encourage its use, as will keeping it in a handy place where you and the kitten spend a lot of time. Cats usually prefer a larger post that they can climb up and down. Some cats like wood or rope-wrapped posts instead of carpet. The more your kitten likes his post and the more he is encouraged to use it, the less he will scratching where he's not supposed to.

Cats are inquisitive and adventuresome, which frequently gets them into trouble. You will need to cat proof your home just as you would for a toddler, to prevent accidents and illness.

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Double sided sticky tape on the arms, back or seat of furniture is helpful. Cats don't like the sticky feel on their feet. It's easy to peel the tape back off once your cat is used to using a scratching post instead.

To prevent chewing on cords or shoes, use unscented, roll-on antiperspirant on these items once or twice a week. Cats don't like the drying, bitter taste and will soon shy away.

Try putting aluminum foil around your plant pots especially when you can't be home to use your squirt bottle. Many types of plants are poisonous to your pet, so it's best to keep them all out of reach.

Be especially vigilant in the laundry and kitchen areas. Laundry soap and bleach are toxic when licked off a cat's paws when they've walked through it. Many cats die each year after exploring the washing machine, taking a nap in the dryer, or jumping on or in a hot stove or oven. Cats are also good at learning how to open cabinet doors!

A collar and ID tag are a good idea, especially if your cat tries to escape outdoors. Use break-away collars to prevent choking. Microchips are also available now to safely and permanently identify your cat if he or she becomes lost.

To prevent litter pan avoidance be sure the pan is easily accessible and in a quiet place where your cat will feel comfortable. If your house is large it is best to have more than one box. We also recommend multiple litter pans with more than one cat in the household, usually one per cat plus one extra. Scoop the boxes daily and empty them completely once a week - many cats won't use a dirty litter pan. Avoid heavily scented litters - cats don't like perfume. Never physically punish a cat for going outside the litter box - they quickly learn to sneak and hide their accidents. Many times litter box avoidance is caused by a physical problem such as intestinal parasites, colitis or bladder infection. **Any time a cat stops using its pan he or she should have a physical examination by a doctor.**

If at any time you are having problems with the behavior of your cat, call us right away. Most behavior problems are easily treated if caught in time.

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