

## Cats and children can get along if you teach your children how to correctly handle cats

Cats and children go well together provided that you teach your child how to correctly handle a cat or a kitten. Deciding to bring a cat into a family with children is a very important decision and should not be taken lightly. Children need to be taught that a cat is not a stuffed animal to be played with and tossed away. They are living creatures to which kindness is critical.

There have been many scientific studies that have proven that having a pet positively influences your child's behavior and development, and having a pet is a great way to teach a child compassion and responsibility.



Cats and children age 5 and younger should never be left alone with each other. You must supervise the time spent together to avoid injury to both child and cat.

### **Teach your child the basics, for example:**

- If a cat or kitten is eating, sleeping or using a litter box, do not disturb the cat.
- Pick a cat up by supporting the chest and back legs and if the cat struggles, put him down. Be sure to prevent children from picking up a cat by its legs; especially kittens. Kittens can

struggle and cause injury to the tendons in their legs. This practice can also be dangerous as a kitten grows into an adult. An adult cat's body weight is simply too great to support a front leg lift.

- Use toys to play with the cat, wiggling fingers or toes will only result in injury. Be sure to make certain dangle toys are not used to lift or drag a cat or kitten.
- Do not tease the cat as he might lash out in defense.
- Do not try to flip a cat onto his back, cats feel vulnerable in this position and might kick out with claws, resulting in injury.
- Shouting and chasing the cat will scare him and make him less likely to play
- Teach your children to not approach a strange cat
- When your children are at a friend's house, teach them to first ask if they can play with the cat

Make sure that the cat has a place where he can escape to when he wants to be left alone. This can be something as simple as a cat perch with a hidey-hole that is high enough so that children cannot reach it. Make playtime fun for cats and children by supplying a wide variety of toys.

Watching cats and children play together is also a great way for you to relax! Whether it is an adult cat or a kitten, you will need to limit the amount of play time so that your cat does not become irritated due to a lack of rest.

A spot set aside in a spare room with a basket, litter box and some food and water is ideal, however make sure that your children understand that when the cat is in this room, they must not bother him.

Discourage the cat from sleeping in your child's room or on your child's bed right from the start. This is a good idea where allergies are concerned, especially if you have a young baby in the house.

By placing a baby monitor in the room, you can keep the door closed and so ensure that the cat does not jump into the baby's crib. If you have just had a baby, you will still need to make time for your cat, so that the cat does not see the infant as an intruder. Set aside time to play with your cat and to groom your cat. Do not even consider getting a cat or a kitten when you have just had a baby as this will prove to be too much to handle – for both you and the new cat.

Teach your child not to play in or around the litter box because of the risk of parasites. Cover sandpits where children play with a net to prevent your cat (and neighborhood cats) from using it as a litter box.

Deworm your cat regularly to prevent cross-infestation from cat to child and child to cat. It is also a good idea to use a product against ticks and fleas. In the event that your cat does bite or scratch a child, disinfect the wounds properly and apply an antiseptic cream.

You can ask your children to fill the cat's water bowl and to put food out for the cat – you will however have to supervise these tasks carefully. By actively involving children in the daily tasks associated with having a cat as a pet, you can help to strengthen the bond between child and cat.