



Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary Kitten Foster Manual



Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary || 1450 East Main Street, Trenton, UT 84338

Serving Northern Utah and Franklin County Idaho



Dear Foster Parent or Foster Family,

Thank you for joining Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary's foster family by choosing to open your home to a cat or kitten that needs your love and special care. There are so many cats and kittens in need of rescuing at this time and with your love and care for these cats and kittens we can save more cats and kittens than we would ever be able to save on our own.

As a foster parent or foster family with Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary we will provide all the necessary items and supplies the cat or kitten may need for as long as they are with you. Every cat and kitten will receive medical care through our veterinary partner. A list of all supplies that we will be sending with you will be included in this manual and on a list that you will sign and check out and return when you are finished fostering the cat or kitten.

We are providing this special manual to help you be the best possible foster parent or foster family for the cat or kitten you will be caring for at this time. Included in the manual you will find Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary's policies and procedures for the care of the cat or kitten you are fostering, where to seek emergency medical care after contacting the foster coordinator, and the adoption or return of the cat or kitten to the Sanctuary.

Included in the manual you will also find information about the daily care of the cat or kitten you are caring for, how to record their medical health and weight, watch for behavioral problems that need to be addressed, an emergency plan for any problems that come up, and what to do when someone is interested in adopting your foster cat or kitten.

Please read through the manual and use it as a guide to provide the best care possible for the cat or kitten you are fostering.

Thank you so much for choosing to become a foster parent or foster family. With you as a partner we can save more cats and kittens who have been abandoned or who are facing euthanasia in shelters each day. If you have any questions while you are fostering do not hesitate to call our foster coordinator or Founder, Melissa Cowley at (435) 881-3450.

Sincerely,

Melissa Cowley
Founder



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Section 1: Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering kittens for Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary. By opening up your home to foster kittens, you're not only helping to save the lives of more kittens, you're providing the individual attention and care these kittens desperately need.

Kittens are some of the most at-risk in shelters because they require intensive around-the-clock care, and many shelters don't have the resources or staff to provide that level of care. That's why the focus of our kitten foster program is to rescue kittens up to eight weeks of age from shelters in the Cache Valley area and local residents. Not only does fostering help kittens find forever families, it saves their lives and greatly decreases the number of cats and kittens who are killed in Utah shelters each year.

Once you have completed your foster application online, our foster coordinator will get in touch with you to sign you up for one of our scheduled orientation and training sessions. In the session, we'll go over this manual and answer any questions you have about the program.

Foster homes are asked to provide care for the kittens and provide transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed. Once the kittens are old enough and weigh enough to be spayed or neutered (typically two pounds), you'll bring them to Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary to be fixed and then look for homes. Care for foster kittens includes a strict feeding schedule, cleaning, and lots of snuggling and play time.

Although fostering kittens is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping kittens find families. Through fostering, we can ensure that all cats and kittens receive the second chance at a life they all deserve to live because every cat matters.

Frequently asked questions

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster kittens
- Transportation to and from the adoption center, Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary Kitten Nursery and all vet appointments as needed



- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach the kittens about positive family and pet relationships

How much time do I need to spend with the kittens?

As much time as you can. The more time you spend with your foster kittens, the more socialized they will be to people. The amount of time required for feeding will vary depending on the age of the kittens you are fostering. Very young kittens need to be bottle-fed every two to three hours, while older ones may be eating on their own and needing to be fed just a couple times a day.

Can I foster kittens even if I have a full-time job?

Yes. The foster coordinator will match you with kittens appropriate for your schedule. We will need you to be available, however, to take the kittens to a vet appointment if they are sick.

How many kittens will I be fostering?

We like to have at least two kittens in a foster home so they can socialize with and learn from each other. Sometimes there are special circumstances in which a kitten goes to a foster home alone, but it's usually for a medical or behavioral reason. The decision is made by the foster coordinator.

How long will the kittens need to be in foster care?

Once a kitten weighs two pounds, he or she can be spayed or neutered and then put up for adoption. If you are fostering a litter of kittens, we will try to keep at least two of the kittens together for the surgery, but we want to get everyone spayed or neutered and ready for adoption as early as possible.



What is my role before and after the kittens' spay/neuter surgery?

You'll need to the spay/neuter appointment with the foster coordinator several weeks in advance of their surgery. You will drop your kittens off at Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary the night before the surgery.

After the kittens' surgeries, you can choose to pick them up so they can recover in your home for a few days, or they can stay at Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary. You will be given a foster kitten biography form to fill out so you can tell potential adopters about any special or fun personality traits that the kittens have or anything else that you think adopters would want to know about the kittens. As you would expect, kittens are usually adopted quickly.

Will I need to give medicine to the foster kittens?

While we do our best to ensure that we are sending out healthy kittens to foster care, most illnesses have incubation periods, meaning that if the kittens picked up something at the shelter, symptoms can arise after you take them home. So, some kittens do not require any medicine, while others do. If your foster kittens need medication, we can show you how to administer it before you take the kittens home.

Can I let my foster kittens play with my personal pets?

Kittens are very susceptible to illness and can carry or catch dangerous ailments easily. For this reason, we require the foster parents to isolate foster kittens with their own supplies for at least two weeks to try and ensure that the kittens are healthy prior to exposing them to your personal pets. We also advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering a Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary kitten, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet.

For more details on how to introduce cats to each other, read "[Introducing a New Cat](#)." If you want to allow your dog to interact with the kittens, read "[How to Introduce a Dog to a Cat](#)." Never leave your personal pets unsupervised around the foster kittens.



Important note: If your personal cat is allowed outdoors, he or she cannot interact with your foster kittens. Kittens are very vulnerable to illness and we want to limit their risk by not exposing them to anything from the outdoors.

Will any of my foster kittens die?

Sadly, kittens are fragile, so it is always possible for them to become ill and pass away while in a foster home. This may be the hardest thing about fostering kittens. If it's something you don't want to encounter, then fostering kittens may not be the best fit for you. But please keep in mind that without foster homes, most of these kittens would not stand a chance of survival in a shelter. You're helping to save lives.

Who will take care of my foster kittens if I need to go out of town?

If you have travel plans while you are fostering kittens for Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary, you will need to contact the foster coordinator and make arrangements to return your foster kittens to the kitten nursery for the duration of the time that you are gone. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we have space for your kittens. If your trip is over a holiday, please provide a minimum of two weeks' notice.

You cannot leave your foster kittens with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. We have specific training for foster parents, and pet sitters have not undergone that training or signed the release waivers for the foster program.

What if a foster kitten bites me?

If any of your foster pets bite you and break skin, causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to the foster coordinator within 24 hours of when the bite occurred. The law requires that we report all bites. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin. If you are unsure, then please report the bite anyway.



What if I want to adopt one of my foster kittens?

If you want to adopt a foster kitten, you will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process. When you bring your foster kittens back to Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary, they are not always immediately available for adoption. We must ensure that their medical records are current and give them a brief examination to ensure they are healthy enough to be adopted. With that said, if you decide to adopt after you've returned the kittens to the sanctuary, please contact the foster coordinator right away because once the kittens are up for adoption, we cannot hold a kitten for anyone, including the foster parent.

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting one of my foster kittens?

If someone you know is interested in adopting one of your foster kittens, please contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible, because once the kittens are up for adoption, we cannot hold them for anyone. However, we do want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can.

Will it be difficult for me to say goodbye to my foster kittens?

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering but remember that we always have more kittens who need wonderful foster homes. Keep in mind that by fostering these vulnerable pets, you are playing a crucial role in helping to save lives.

Can I foster kittens to fulfill a community service obligation?

Unfortunately, Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary cannot sign off on court-ordered community service hours for fostering. Community service is supposed to be supervised work, and fostering is unsupervised, since it takes place in your home.



Section 2: Preparing for your foster kittens

Your foster kittens should be separated from all other animals in your household and kept in a small area, such as a spare room or bathroom, where they have access to their food, water and litter box. And because kittens cannot regulate their body temperature, this area should also be in a warm, draft-free area. It may be a good idea to consider an area that is easy to clean up in terms of spills and litter box accidents, which will happen since the kittens are learning. Please don't put the kittens in a garage or place that has outdoor access; those locations are not safe.

Supplies you'll need

Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary will provide you with any supplies that you may need. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for your foster kittens. Here's what you'll need to care for your foster kittens:

- At least one bowl for dry food and one for water: If you have a large litter, you will need to provide more than one bowl each for water and food.
- A supply of kitten food: At the kitten nursery, kittens will be fed Royal Canin kitten dry food and wet food, so they will need to be fed that brand of food (or better) in the foster home.
- New bottle for each bottle-fed litter and formula for bottle-feeding: Breeder's Edge is the required brand of formula for bottle-feeding kittens.
- Litter box with low sides: More than one may be needed for larger litters.
- Non-clumping litter: Use pine pellets or clay litter.
- Heat source: Kittens can't keep themselves warm, so you have to provide a heat source. The SnuggleSafe microwave heating pad is recommended.
- A soft place to sleep: Warm fleece blankets work well.

- A secure sleeping area: A cat carrier or incubator work well.
- Toys: Use kitten-safe toys that are easy to sanitize and clean. Kittens can play with them when you're not home.
- Scratching post: Kittens need to learn to scratch on them rather than the furniture.

Kitten-proofing your home

Foster kittens are tiny and cute, but just like children, they are also very curious. They will try to get into everything to explore, so you will need to kitten-proof your home. Here are some tips:



- Put away any small items that a kitten can swallow.
- Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets and remove toxic plants.
- If your kittens are staying in a bathroom, make sure that the toilet lid is closed at all times.
- Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide in.
- When setting up your kitten room, be sure to place the litter boxes as far away from food and water as possible.

Section 3: Scheduling appointments for your foster kittens

During the time that you foster kittens, you'll need to make a number of appointments — to pick up and drop off your kittens, take them in for vaccines and spay/neuter, and pick up supplies. Please note that all appointments, including your pickup and drop-off appointments, should be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.

Picking up and returning your foster kittens

To pick up and return kittens, simply schedule an appointment with the foster coordinator. When you speak with the foster coordinator about picking up some kittens, he or she will assess what age of kittens will work best with your lifestyle.

Scheduling vaccines for your kittens

When you pick up your foster kittens, you will receive a Kitten Foster Goal Sheet, which will contain the dates that your foster kittens' vaccines are due and any pertinent medical or behavioral information that you need for that group of kittens. Vaccination appointments are scheduled at least 24 hours in advance via a phone call or email to the foster coordinator.

Scheduling vet appointments for your kittens

For non-emergency situations, please understand that our veterinary partners book quickly and may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24 hours in advance. You can call the foster coordinator to request a vet appointment seven days a week from 9 am to 6 pm. When you call to set up an appointment, the



foster coordinator will discuss your availability and then contact the veterinary clinic to schedule the appointment.

Once the appointment is scheduled, the foster coordinator will call you with the appointment day and time and give you a unique voucher number that you will use to fill out a medical voucher when you arrive at your appointment. This number is required for the appointment, so you will want to remember it or write it down. You will also be able to pick up any needed medications and special food from the veterinarian during your appointment.

Picking up supplies

We have designated days and times for supply pickup. To schedule supply pickup please contact the foster coordinator at least 24 hours in advance.

Scheduling your kittens for spay/neuter

When your foster kittens weigh at least two pounds (900 grams), they can be spayed or neutered. You'll need to contact the foster coordinator for spay or neuter surgery for your kittens.

Section 4: Caring for your foster kittens

Because kittens are fragile, it is important for you to watch the behavior of your foster kittens closely and monitor their health daily. To keep track of their health, keep a journal of the kittens' weight, eating habits and overall health. You should weigh the kittens daily to ensure that they are growing, and record the weight in the journal.

Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness or blueness in color. Notify the foster coordinator immediately if a kitten is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).

Kittens are susceptible to illness, so foster kittens must be kept indoors. If your personal cat has access to the outdoors, he or she cannot interact with your foster kittens. Also, please do not let your foster kittens ride loose in a car. Use a carrier at all times to transport kittens to and from appointments.



Caring for bottle-fed kittens

Bottle-feeding neonatal kittens requires an around-the-clock commitment. Thank you so much for offering your time and attention to these fragile babies. And please remember that we are here to support you. Here's some general info about bottle-feeding.

Milk preparation. You can pre-mix enough formula to last for 24 hours of feeding, but it must be refrigerated at all times. Discard all unused and mixed formula after 24 hours. Only heat enough formula for each feeding and throw away any uneaten warmed formula after each feeding. Do not re-use warmed formula because harmful bacteria can develop in it.

Bottle-feeding tips. It is easier to feed your kittens when they are gently wrapped in a towel or blanket, instead of just using your hands. The towel or blanket is softer and warmer than your hands and being wrapped up makes the kittens feel safer as they eat. If the kitten allows it, the forelegs should be free to allow him to “knead” with his feet. This kneading activity is essential to the kitten's muscle development and helps aid in digestion of the kitten's food. Also, be careful to position the kitten so that his belly is toward the floor. To decrease the chance of formula being aspirated into the lungs, kittens should not be fed on their backs.

Latching on. It may take a couple tries for a kitten to latch on to the bottle nipple. Just be patient; sometimes kittens need some encouragement to eat. Make sure that the nipple you are using on the bottle has an adequate flow of milk. When the nipple tip is punctured with a sterile needle, formula should drip out (one drop at a time, not a stream) when the bottle is inverted 180 degrees. Do not hesitate to call the foster coordinator if you need any help or assistance with feeding your kittens. We are always here for you, ready to answer any questions that you may have.

Aspiration. If liquid bubbles out through the kitten's nose or he starts coughing, he may have gotten formula in his lungs. Pat the kitten very gently on the back to elicit a cough or sneeze, or hold him in an inverted position, tail over head, for a moment to remove the formula from his lungs. Please notify the foster department if this happens so we can determine if antibiotics or a vet visit is needed.

Wetting and pooping. Bottle-fed kittens need help with elimination, so you'll need to stimulate your kittens to wet and poop. After you feed them, wipe each kitten's back end with a baby wipe or warm wet cotton ball. Remember to do this every time you feed them. Document the color and consistency in your journal. Kittens should urinate after every meal and should poop at least once a day. The normal color of kitten poop is various shades of mustard and the consistency is similar as well. When a kitten is first introduced to formula, it is normal for him or her not to poop for 48 hours.



Signs of illness. Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness or blueness in color. Notify the foster coordinator immediately if a kitten is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).

Keeping kittens warm. When kittens are infants (less than two weeks old), they can be kept in incubators or small carriers that can easily be covered by a blanket to maintain heat and reduce draftiness. As they grow and become more mobile, they will need more space to roam and play. Also, don't forget that kittens cannot regulate their body temperatures, so please keep a SnuggleSafe disc warm and with them at all times. Because kittens' skin is very sensitive and prone to thermal burns, the warming disc must be covered by a blanket and puppy pad that the kittens cannot burrow under.

Weighing. Please weigh the kittens before and after each feeding to ensure that they are growing, and record the weights in the journal.

How to bottle-feed kittens

Kittens will bottle-feed every two to four hours, depending on their age. Steps for bottle-feeding a kitten:

1. Warm the formula: Place the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes. Before feeding the kittens, always test the temperature of the formula by placing a few drops on your inner wrist to be sure it is not too hot. It should be slightly warmer than your body temperature.
2. Ensure that your foster kitten is warm before offering food. Do not attempt to feed a kitten who is chilled* because it can have serious health consequences.
3. Wrap the kitten in a towel or blanket and position him so that his belly is toward the floor. Kittens should not be fed on their backs or in an upright position.
4. Turn the bottle upside down and allow a drop of formula to come out. Place the bottle nipple in the kitten's mouth and gently move it back and forth, holding the bottle at a 45-degree angle to keep air from getting into the kitten's stomach. This movement should encourage the kitten to start eating. If at first you don't succeed, wait a few minutes and try again. Usually the kitten will latch on and begin to suckle. If the bottle appears to be collapsing, gently remove the nipple from the kitten's mouth and let more air return to the bottle.
5. Weigh each kitten before and after feeding and record the weights in your journal.
* A kitten's ideal body temperature is 100 to 102 degrees. If a kitten feels cold to the touch, contact the foster coordinator immediately. A kitten who is cold and unresponsive should be warmed right away. Place the kitten on an approved heating pad safely wrapped in two or three layers of towels. Turn the kitten side to side every 5 minutes. To stimulate blood flow, you may, ever so gently, massage the kitten with hand-rubbing.

Weaning kittens

Once your kittens are about four weeks old, it is time to start the weaning process. Your goal is to have the kittens eating on their own consistently by the time they're adopted. So, beginning at four weeks, start offering warm gruel (two parts wet food, one part formula) at all times, along with dry kitten food and water. Every four to six hours, discard any uneaten gruel and provide a fresh batch.

You will still be supplementing the kittens with a bottle every eight hours to ensure that they are getting all the nutrients they need but encourage them to eat gruel before you offer a bottle. To get a kitten interested in trying the gruel, you may have to offer the gruel with a spoon or use your finger to place a small amount on the kitten's tongue. Ideally, by the end of five weeks, your foster kittens will be happily eating dry and wet food on their own.

It is important to continue weighing your foster kittens every day, after each feeding, to ensure that they are always gaining weight. During the weaning stage, you should also begin introducing the

kittens to the litter box because they should be able to eliminate on their own by about four weeks of age.

Making formula

Mix two parts water with one part formula. Mix the powder and water until all clumps are gone. Remember, mixed formula only lasts for 24 hours.

Making gruel

Mix 1/2 can of wet food with 1/4 can of formula per kitten. You can add a little water if the kittens seem to like a looser consistency. It's alright make gruel in bulk and refrigerate it, but you'll need to warm it before offering it to the kittens.

Caring for independent eaters

By six to seven weeks old, your kittens should be independent eaters. Dry food should be their primary source of food but offer wet food frequently as well to encourage eating and maximize growth. Replace the water in their water dish twice a day and wipe out the dish if needed.



During this stage, your daily responsibilities include socializing the kittens and exposing them to new situations and environments. It's important to try and keep all experiences positive for the kittens, so give them lots of treats and toys as they learn about new sounds, smells, places and faces. See [Section 7](#) for more tips on how to successfully socialize your kittens.

As always, watch the behavior of your kittens and monitor their health daily. Continue to keep a journal detailing each foster kitten's weight, appetite, energy level and overall health. Weigh the kittens once a day, preferably around the same time, to minimize the variables when tracking the kittens' growth. Look over each kitten every day for physical changes or potential medical problems.

Now that the kittens are using a litter box, be sure to scoop the box at least two times daily. Every other day, dump the litter, clean the box with a mild detergent (such as dishwashing liquid) and put in fresh litter. You'll want to monitor the kittens for diarrhea and clean the litter box more frequently if diarrhea is apparent. For more info on litter box training, see the appendix, and for details about instilling good litter box habits, see Section 7.

At this stage, play with the kittens several times a day with interactive toys. Play time provides stimulation, encourages socialization and releases excess energy. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster kittens like. Cat toys don't have to be fancy or expensive. Cats often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag (remove the handles for safety) or a box with holes cut in the sides.

Don't leave your foster kittens alone with any toys that could be easily ingested or cause harm to them. Examples are string toys, yarn and Da Bird (feathers dangling from a string and wand). Toys such as ping-pong balls and toilet paper tubes are safe. Also, it may seem cute, but discourage your foster kittens from play-biting your hands and feet. This is something that adopters may not find desirable.

Cleaning up between litters

Once you've returned your group of kittens to Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary for adoption, you must sanitize your fostering room or area before you can take home a new batch of kittens. Remove anything the kittens touched and clean it with a weak bleach solution, consisting of one part bleach to 32 parts cold water.

If you have items that can be washed in the dishwasher, please do so since the heat will disinfect those items. Plastic or metal items that need to be sterilized, such as litter boxes or plastic toys, should be



soaked in the bleach solution for 10 minutes and then rinsed off. Wash all bedding with bleach and hot water and throw away any toys that cannot be sterilized. Being conscientious about sterilization will help ensure that your next foster group will not catch any illnesses from the previous group of kittens.

Quick feeding guide

We will provide you with very detailed training regarding feeding before you take your foster kittens home. But here's a brief summary of the feeding protocol for kittens up to eight weeks old:

Week 1: Bottle-feeding

Food type: Milk replacement formula

Frequency: Every 2–3 hours (8–12 times per day)

Amount: 3–4 cc per feeding, approximately 3–6 g per kitten

Week 2: Bottle-feeding

Food type: Milk replacement formula

Frequency: Every 3 hours (8 times per day)

Amount: 5–6 cc per feeding, approximately 8–15 g per kitten

Week 3: Bottle-feeding

Food type: Milk replacement formula

Frequency: Every 4 hours (6 times per day)

Amount: 13–17 cc per feeding, approximately 10–20 g per kitten

Week 4: Weaning stage

Food type: Milk replacement formula, gruel, kitten kibble and water

Frequency: Kibble, water and gruel should be available to kittens at all times; bottle-feed every 8 hours (3 times per day)

Amount: 13–17 cc per feeding with the bottle; will vary depending on how much gruel the kitten eats

Weeks 5–8: Solid food

Food type: Dry kitten food, wet kitten food and water

Frequency: Available at all times

You will need to offer fresh wet food 2 to 3 times daily.

Section 5: Fostering moms and kittens

Mother cats, also known as “queens,” need to be in a calm environment so that they can be stress-free and feel like they are keeping their kittens safe. Sometimes, stress can cause a mother cat to become aggressive or to not care for her babies properly. With that in mind, choose a private and quiet room of your home, away from the daily activities of your family, in which to situate the mother cat and her kittens.

It's also important that they be kept away from other pets in the home. Other pets can be perceived as a threat by the mother cat and cause her to act aggressively to protect her young. If you have children and an active home, it may be best to foster when the kittens are four weeks or older. Sometimes mother cats will behave less defensively if their kittens are older.

Bringing everyone home

Set up your fostering room before you bring the mother cat and her kitten's home. You should put the litter box as far away from the mother cat's food and water bowls as possible and provide a couple of different safe places where she can care for her kittens. A dark area equipped with an incubator is ideal.



A incubator is large enough for the mother cat to lie on her side slightly away from her kittens with all of the kittens in the incubator with her. Keep a clean warm fleece blanket in the incubator at all times. Do not place straw, hay or shavings in the area where the mother and kittens are kept.

When you bring your foster kittens and their mom home, put them all in the fostering room and close the door, allowing the mom to explore on her own. Give her a couple of hours before you enter her room and don't be alarmed if it takes a few days for her to stop hiding.

Mom's care of her kittens

The momma cat should take care of her kittens by herself for at least three to four weeks before she starts the weaning process for her babies. Each momma cat that you foster will be slightly different in her level of attentiveness, but there are three basic stages of nursing. If for any reason your momma cat is not performing one of the listed functions, please notify the foster coordinator right away to evaluate whether the mom has a medical concern that we need to address.

Kittens are born blind, but they can feel their mother's heat and seek her out to begin nursing within two hours of being born. Mother cats should be lying on their sides to ensure that their kittens can find the nipples for nursing. Here are three stages of nursing:

- One to two weeks old: The mother cat initiates nursing by licking her kittens to wake them up and curling her body around them. After she wakes all of her babies, the kittens search for a short time period and then quickly latch on.
- Two to three weeks old: The kittens' eyes and ears begin to function and they start to explore beyond the nesting area. This is when the kittens start interacting and playing with their mother. At this age, the kittens start to initiate some of the nursing and momma should comply by lying in the nursing position.
- Four to five weeks old: The kittens begin weaning and, in turn, the mother cat no longer initiates any nursing. If the mother cat still allows the kittens to nurse, it will be initiated by the kittens and can be lateral or upright nursing.

Occasionally, mom cats develop mastitis when their kittens stop nursing and begin to eat on their own. Mastitis occurs when the mammary glands inflame and harden, creating a very painful infection for the mother cat and causing symptoms such as a fever and listlessness. If you think your mother cat

may have mastitis, call the foster coordinator on the next business day. This is not an emergency condition.

The mother cat will groom and lick her babies frequently for the first two to four weeks. She will stimulate her kittens to wet and poop and will generally consume the fecal matter and urine. As the babies become more mobile, they will start to leave the nest and deposit urine and feces nearby, which is a good time to start introducing a couple of low-sided litter boxes (disposable tend to work best). To ensure that the mother cat has enough to eat, give her access to both wet and dry food at all times. Food intake for a nursing mother can be two to four times the amount eaten by a cat who's not nursing.

When fostering a momma cat, it is very important to observe her behavior daily and watch her interactions with her kittens to spot any problems. Unfortunately, 8 percent of kittens pass away because of inadequate maternal care. This can happen for many different reasons, some of which are beyond our control.

Problem behaviors in momma cats

Here are some details about problem behaviors in momma cats and what you can do about them.

Maternal neglect. Sometimes a mother cat stops providing care to one or all of her kittens. The neglect may be because of a birth defect or weakness in the kitten; she may just be trying to follow nature's course, focusing her attention on the stronger kittens. Neglect may also happen because she is inexperienced or she's in a stressful environment. Either way, that's why it's so important to make daily observations to ensure that she is caring for her babies. If she will let you handle the kittens, you should weigh each kitten once a day to ensure that they are gaining weight. If you notice that she is spending all of her time away from the kittens, is not grooming or nursing them frequently, or doesn't respond to their cries, please call the foster coordinator right away.

Maternal aggression toward other animals. Aggressive behavior directed at other animals is common and expected from mother cats because they have a maternal instinct to protect their young at all times. With that in mind, please do not try to introduce her to the other animals in your home. As mentioned above, the mom cat and her kittens should have a quiet room of their own away from all other pets so that she and her babies can always feel safe. If she has seen another animal and becomes stressed or aggressive, it is very important to leave her alone and not try to comfort her. Give her 20 minutes or so to calm down and then check on her.

Maternal aggression toward people. Sometimes mother cats will act aggressively toward people. These behaviors may include hissing, growling, swatting and biting. Again, the mother is merely trying to protect her young. We evaluate mom cats for these behaviors before sending them into foster homes, but sometimes the behaviors develop later. If you have a mother exhibiting these behaviors, do not try to "correct" the behavior with a spray bottle or any type of punishment. She is only acting out of instinct to protect her babies and you could cause her aggressive behavior to escalate. Contact the foster coordinator at the first sign of any of the above behaviors so we can assess the situation and decide on the safest option for momma and her babies.

Separating kittens and moms

If all of your foster animals, mom included, are healthy and friendly, we have no reason to separate mom from kittens before they are eight weeks old. But there are a few medical or behavioral reasons for separating them earlier than eight weeks:

- As mentioned above, if the mother cat is showing signs of maternal neglect and is no longer caring for her kittens, the foster coordinator may decide to separate her from her kittens.
- If the mother cat is semi-feral or very under socialized, we may decide to separate the kittens once they are eating on their own consistently and no longer need to nurse (around four to five weeks old). Separating them would prevent the kittens from learning feral behaviors from their mother and help them to become socialized, which increases their chances of finding forever homes.
- If there is a medical concern about the mom or babies, a veterinarian could make the decision to separate the kittens from the mother cat.

The kittens' best chance at survival is to stay with their mom. Please do not separate your foster kittens from their mom for any reason, or attempt to supplement the mother's milk with formula, without consulting the foster coordinator.

Section 6: Medical and emergency protocols

When you pick up your foster kittens, you will receive a Foster Goal Sheet that specifies the dates that vaccines are due and any medications that your kittens are taking. You are responsible for scheduling appointments for your kittens' vaccines on or around the due dates indicated on your Foster Goal Sheet. Vaccines and dewormers are given starting at four weeks old and every two weeks afterward until they are adopted. To schedule appointments for vaccines, call or email the foster coordinator. If you are fostering a group of kittens on medications, please ensure that your kittens get all prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason. If any of your foster kittens have not responded to medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a veterinarian), please contact the foster coordinator.

Veterinary care

Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary provides all medical care for our foster kittens and mother's at our approved veterinary clinics. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster kittens and mother's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster kittens and mother's at our approved veterinary partners.

If your foster kittens or mother's need to go to the veterinarian, please notify the foster coordinator by phone. The foster coordinator will schedule the appointment and issue you a medical voucher number, which is required for your veterinary appointment. Each voucher has a unique number, assigned by the staff member who authorizes and schedules your appointment. Please bring this

voucher number to your appointment; the vet will not see the foster animal without the voucher number.

For non-emergency situations, please understand that our veterinary partners book quickly and may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24 hours in advance.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the foster coordinator or adoptions manager.



Signs of illness and what to do next

Kittens do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if a foster kitten is under the weather will require diligent observation of the kittens' daily activity and appetite levels. Be aware that kittens act differently at different ages. For example, a healthy two-week-old kitten will sleep often and get up only to nurse, whereas a healthy six-week-old kitten should have a lot of energy. If you have any questions about the health of your foster kittens, please contact the foster coordinator, who will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Eye discharge. It is normal for kittens to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up. But if a kitten has yellow or green discharge or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment.

Sneezing and nasal discharge. Occasional sneezing is common in kittens. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, examine the discharge coming from the sneeze. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be necessary. But it is important to monitor the kittens in case the problem becomes worse. If the discharge becomes colored, contact the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment because the kittens may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the kittens' breathing. If they start to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, call the foster coordinator immediately and follow the emergency contact protocol. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the kittens' eating habits more closely to ensure that they are still eating. And, of course, continue to weigh them daily.

Loss of appetite. Your foster kittens may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. Unwillingness to eat in kittens can be very serious, so pay close attention to whether the kittens are eating. Kittens should eat on a four- to eight-hour schedule, depending on their age. If a kitten under four weeks old misses two meals or a kitten over four weeks of age goes more than 12 hours without eating, the foster coordinator should be called. Also, if a kitten less than eight weeks old does not urinate for over 12 hours, call the coordinator. With a kitten who is not eating, please do not change the kitten's diet without contacting the foster department. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which will lead to dehydration.

Lethargy. The activity level of your kittens will vary with each kitten in your litter and with age. Sick kittens may have lower energy levels and just want to sit in your lap or on the floor and not move much or play. If you notice a drop in your foster kittens' energy level, please contact the foster coordinator to make a medical appointment. If a kitten cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, this is an emergency, so you'll need to start the emergency contact protocol. Note: Some under

socialized kittens will move less because they are frightened. If you have a fearful group of kittens, it can be more difficult to determine if their energy levels are low. But tracking all behaviors in your journal will help you decide whether you should call the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment.

Dehydration. Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the kitten's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the kitten is dehydrated. Please call the foster coordinator immediately and start the emergency contact protocol, as dehydration can be fatal in kittens.

Vomiting. If a foster kitten has thrown up two or more times in one day, please notify the foster coordinator. If there is bile or blood in the vomit, please call right away.

Pain or strain while urinating. When kittens first go into a foster home, they may not urinate due to stress. If a kitten hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact the foster coordinator. Also, if you notice the kitten straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact the foster coordinator immediately because it may be indicative of an infection or a urethral obstruction, which can be life-threatening.

Diarrhea. In kittens, it can be tricky to determine if diarrhea is a problem. Soft stool diarrhea, most likely caused by stress, is normal for the first two days after you take kittens home. Kittens who are nursing tend to have loose stool, but if it is watery or very large in volume, that's a concern. By the time kittens are five weeks old and are eating consistently on their own, they should have firm, normal stool. If your foster kittens have liquid stool, please contact the foster department so that a vet appointment can be scheduled; the kittens may need medication.

Once your kittens are using a litter box, please monitor the box daily. Remember that diarrhea will dehydrate your kittens, so be proactive about contacting the foster department if you notice any diarrhea. If a kitten has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact the foster coordinator immediately and start the emergency phone protocol.

Frequent ear scratching. A foster kitten may have ear mites if she scratches her ears often and/or shakes her head frequently, or if you see a dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds when you look in her ears. Ear mites can be treated by a veterinarian, so please call or email the foster coordinator for a medical appointment.

Hair loss. Please contact the foster department if you notice any hair loss on your foster kittens. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster kittens' coats every day.

Serious kitten ailments

Kittens are susceptible to these illnesses:

- Fading kitten syndrome: Symptoms include unwillingness to eat, dehydration, lethargy, weight loss, coldness to the touch, and difficulty with breathing or labored breathing.
- Panleukopenia (feline distemper): Symptoms include unwillingness to eat, vomiting, diarrhea and/or dehydration. The diarrhea often has a mucoid texture and/or is bloody.

If a kitten is displaying any combination of the symptoms listed above, please contact the foster coordinator immediately and start the emergency phone protocol. These ailments can be fatal if left untreated.

Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a kitten? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of fading kitten syndrome or distemper (see “Serious Kitten Ailments” above)
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn’t stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours

If a foster kitten displays any of these symptoms, please follow the emergency phone protocol. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help. However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, start the emergency phone protocol.

If you think your foster pet may incur permanent damage or pass away if not seen by a veterinarian immediately, please proceed to the approved emergency clinic and start the emergency phone chain on the way.

Section 7: Socializing and instilling good behaviors in kittens

Your goal as a foster parent is to prepare your foster kittens for forever homes. While a big part of that is helping the kittens to grow and be healthy, another component is helping them develop the good habits that will make them wonderful companions for their adopters.

Establishing good litter box habits

Start introducing your kittens to the litter box around the age of four to five weeks. Make sure the litter box you are using has low sides, to make it easy for the kittens to climb in and out. Some foster parents like to use disposable litter boxes, and that’s fine. Keep kittens confined to a small area and have at least one litter box in each room that the kittens can access. You can encourage the kittens to use the bathroom facilities by gently returning them to their litter box every 15–20 minutes while they’re playing.

You also want to make sure that you are scooping the litter box at least twice a day, more if you have a large litter or they have diarrhea. You will also need to dump the litter box entirely every two to three days and clean with dish soap. A clean litter box will promote good bathroom habits for the kittens going forward. If your foster kittens are not using the litter box, please notify the foster coordinator so you can start resolving the issue before it becomes a habit.

Oftentimes, kittens miss the litter box if they have medical issues like diarrhea, or if they have too much free space, causing them to forget where the box is when they have to go. Clean all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner and don't ever punish a kitten for having an accident. For more info about litter box training, see the appendix.

Discipline

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster kittens for living successfully in a home. So, we ask that you help your foster kittens to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pets. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors.

You must not punish the kittens for behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If a kitten is doing something undesirable, distract him or her before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster pets, which will help them to learn faster.

Play time

Play time is a very important part of kitten development. It is crucial for young kittens to have other kittens to wrestle with in order to develop appropriate play skills and be properly socialized with other kittens. Kittens also need toys to play with so that they can get physical exercise and mental stimulation. There are two types of toys that help with kitten development:

- Solo toys are things the kittens can play with when you aren't there. These toys should be easy to clean and impossible for the kittens to consume. Examples are ping pong balls, toilet paper tubes, bottle corks and plastic shower curtain rings.
- Interactive toys are things that you use to engage the kittens in play. Examples are Da Bird (a feather dangling from a string) and other toys with yarn or string attached. Don't leave kittens alone with these toys, since they can easily strangle or be ingested by the kittens.

During play time, it is always important to discourage kittens from biting your hands and feet. It may seem cute, but we want to avoid teaching kittens a habit that adopters may find undesirable.

Kitten Plays Too Rough

Play is a very important and fun part of a kitten's life. Teaching your kitten proper play skills and playing with him every day will give him appropriate outlets for his energy.

Kitten aggressive play

To decrease the chance that your kitten will seek out human hands and feet as play toys, don't ever play with your kitten with your hands and feet. In your kitten's mind, a playful nip is indistinguishable from a painful bite. He will not understand that it's not okay to chew on or bite people unless you teach him.

If your kitten plays with your hands or feet, make your hand or foot go limp (he's more likely to continue attacking a moving object) and say "Ouch!" in a loud voice. Then, pull out an interactive toy, such as a feather attached to a wand, and play with him vigorously. You are teaching him that hands are no fun to play with, but interactive toys are great fun because they are a challenge.

Toys for kittens

Kittens need active play and they also like novelty, so buy several different types of interactive toys for her and find out which ones she likes best. You should play with the toys with your cat; do not set them out and expect her to play with them on her own. If she is not interested in them for the first few days, give her time, and try different toys.

One way to keep her from getting bored with her toys is to put some of her toys out of reach, so that they are new and exciting when you pull them out for a play session. If you do leave toys around the house for her to play with, rotate them every few days to increase the novelty factor. Toys that encourage the use of multiple senses (i.e., sight, smell, hearing, touch) are often exciting for kittens. If you play with your kitten regularly, you can engage her in fun before she decides to pounce on you.

Socializing and handling

Introducing your foster kittens to new things and new experiences will also help prepare them for living happily in forever homes. Follow these rules to positively expose your kittens to new people, environments and noises:

- **New people:** Introducing your foster animals to new people will help them become well-adjusted adult cats. Monitor all interactions with new people, though, to ensure that they are positive, not scary, experiences for the kittens. Have new people give gentle pets and treats to the kittens and interact with them using fun toys. If children are visiting, they must always be supervised until they are old enough to understand how to gently interact with a kitten.
- **New environments:** It will help the kittens' adjustment into adopters' homes if you can allow your kittens to experience different parts of your home. Whenever you introduce the kittens to a new space, provide lots of treats and play with interactive toys so that the kittens associate the new space with their favorite things. Keep the exploratory sessions brief so you don't overwhelm your kittens and return them to their living space if they do seem overwhelmed or scared.
- **New noises:** It is beneficial to expose kittens to a variety of normal household noises but, again, try to do it in a positive way. The key is to introduce different noises gradually. For example, start by keeping a radio on low volume and gradually increase the volume over a few days. Another example: Run the vacuum in another room at first, with your kittens at a safe distance. Then, over the course of a few days, move the vacuum noise closer to their room. If another person plays with the kittens while you make the noise, it may help alleviate any stress or fear

that they may feel. Some kittens are naturally fearful, so just go even slower with the timid ones.

Another thing you can work on with your foster kittens is getting them comfortable with being in a cat carrier. When you are not using the carrier for transportation, leave the carrier (with the door removed or securely propped open) in your foster kittens' room. Put toys, treats and a soft blanket in the carrier, to encourage the kittens to go in and spend time there.

Schedule for successful socialization

If your foster kittens are not socialized at all when you bring them home, you'll need to have a more focused socialization plan. Remember, keep all experiences positive for the kittens.

Days 1–7: Your foster kittens may be hissing, swatting, spitting and/or growling.

Activities to engage in:

- “Burrito-wrapping” the kitten in a blanket or towel: Use gloves and a towel to handle the kitten if needed.
- Hand-feeding: Feed the kittens dabs of baby food (protein only, with no onion or garlic on the ingredients list) or canned tuna by hand.
- Picking up and returning: Repeatedly pick up each kitten and return him/her to their safe space.
- Playing: Try engaging the kittens in play with interactive toys.

Days 7–14: The kittens may hiss when you approach, but respond to touching and petting.

Activities to engage in:

- Handling: Continue handling and petting the kittens. If improvement is shown, try to move to handling other body parts, but do not go too fast.
- More playing: Start standing and walking around while playing with the kittens, to get them used to normal human movement.
- More hand-feeding: Give the kittens treats while you handle them, to help them learn that you are not a threat.

After 14 days: Your kittens may still be shy, but should be more comfortable with you approaching them and should no longer display defensive aggression behaviors. If your kittens do not show improvement at all after two weeks of attempts at socialization, please contact the foster department for guidance.

Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to foster kittens and mother's. With you help we can save more kittens and mother's than we could ever do on our own so that every kitten and mother can have the second chance at life they deserve because every cat matters.

Appendix

1-Guiding your foster kittens' behavior

Kittens need to be socialized to interact appropriately with both humans and other cats. When you socialize kittens to humans, you're helping to create happy, healthy adult cats who will make wonderful pets. That is why it's so important to handle, talk to and play with your foster kittens.

Well-socialized mother cats are more likely to have well-socialized kittens. The kittens will pick up on whether their mother is calm or fearful around people. If there is no mother cat, kittens can still learn from their litter mates. Play helps to increase social, coordination and learning skills.

A healthy mother-kitten relationship

A mother's direct interaction with her kittens includes the "brrp" or chirping calls she makes as she approaches them, as well as nuzzling and licking them to awaken them and to stimulate urination and defecation.

Initially, the kitten's activities are restricted to crawling along the mother's body and nuzzling against her to locate a nipple, often in competition with litter mates. The kittens suckle, lie still by the mother, move around near her and call out to her.

A call frequently given by the kittens is the cry associated with distress. It is given when a kitten awakens and is hungry, when a kitten's movement is restricted (e.g., the kitten is trapped under the mother) or he becomes isolated and cold. The mother should answer the call.

Suckling is accompanied by kneading against the mother's abdomen. It is thought that these kneading movements stimulate the mother's milk flow, help to develop the kitten's muscles and aid in digestion. The kittens may initially spend about eight hours a day suckling, but this activity decreases as they grow older.

As the kittens become older and more mobile, they become increasingly responsible for approaching the mother and initiating suckling. In the later stages of the weaning period (at about seven weeks old), the kittens become almost wholly responsible for initiating suckling. The mother may actively impede these efforts by blocking access to her nipples or by removing herself from the kittens' proximity.

If you notice that the mother cat is neglecting her kittens inappropriately or showing any other negative behaviors mentioned in this manual, please contact the foster coordinator.

Kitten development and what you can do

Time and effort are required to properly socialize kittens. In fact, when they're between four and twelve weeks old, daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the kitten's personality and emotional growth.

You'll want your foster kittens to become familiar with having their paws touched (front and back), their mouths opened and their ears touched. Combining this type of handling with regular grooming sessions and body massages helps to prevent skin sensitivity or aversion to touch. And acquainting kittens with a variety of sights, sounds and textures will help them to grow into well-socialized adult cats. Listed below are some characteristics of kittens at different stages and the steps you can take to help socialize them.

Newborn

Appearance: Newborn kittens should be pink, firm, plump and generally healthy-looking.

Temperature: Normal rectal temperature for newborns is 96 or 97 degrees Fahrenheit.

Eyes and ears: Closed, but they can still hear (though poorly) and respond to bright light with a blink reflex.

Muscles: Healthy kittens will curl their bodies and limbs inward.

1 to 2 weeks

Temperature: Normal rectal temperature has gradually increased to 100 degrees F.

Eyes and ears: Open at approximately 11-15 days.

Muscles: Kittens can use their front legs to stand and walk shakily.

What you can do: You can engage in gentle handling and cuddling at this point. These sessions should be very short (one to two minutes), and great care should be taken in the handling process. Rub the hair coat gently with your hands, and gently finger the webbing in between the toes. Rub the ears and muzzle.

2 to 3 weeks

Temperature: Kittens are able to maintain their own body temperature within the normal range (100.5 – 102.5 degrees F).

Eyes: Vision is initially poor, even after the eyes have opened, but continues to develop until three to four weeks of age. If the eyes fail to open and the lids look sticky, wipe the lids very gently with dampened cotton lightly smeared with a little petroleum jelly to ease their opening. The eyelids should never be pulled apart. If a kitten's eyelids still haven't opened by 14 days, contact the foster department.

Muscles: The rear legs can now support the body. Kittens are crawling.

Teeth: Deciduous incisors start to appear, followed by deciduous canines.

What you can do:

- Provide the kittens with a whelping box area for sleeping and another area, away from the sleeping and feeding area, that contains the litter box.
- Provide five minutes of handling exercises. Gently roll the kitten over on her back for 5-10 seconds, and then draw her close to you, stroking and cuddling her. Never do this while actively feeding the kitten. Be careful not to startle the kitten with sudden movements or loud sounds.
- Start grooming: Softly and gently brush the kitten's coat with a few strokes, touch the ears and mouth, and pretend to clip the nails by adding gentle pressure to the kitten's paws.

3 to 4 weeks

Eyes and ears: Vision and hearing are normal. Blink response disappears with the development of accurate pupil control. The kitten is now able to use visual clues to locate and approach the mother. The eyes should be completely open by 17 days.

Muscles: By 21 days, kittens can walk with a fairly steady gait. They can also sit and have reasonable control of their toes.

Teeth: Deciduous incisors and canine teeth continue to come in.

What you can do:

- If the mother and kittens are no longer using the whelping box, it's OK to remove it.
- At about four weeks old, the kittens will begin to eliminate on their own. This is a good time to introduce additional litter boxes. Use boxes with low edges so that the kittens can easily climb in and out. Only use non-clumping litter, since kittens often try to eat the litter when they are learning.
- The kittens will start to explore their immediate environment. Provide safe, simple toys to help stimulate them.
- The kittens can be introduced to other people at this time, but this interaction should be carefully controlled. The interaction should be limited to five minutes of time spent in gentle massage and cuddling.
- As the main caregiver, you should continue the grooming and handling exercises: holding, cuddling and stroking each kitten's body, including ears, tail and muzzle.

4 to 5 weeks

Eyes and ears: Vision is markedly improved. From three to five weeks, kittens learn guided paw placement and obstacle avoidance.

Muscles: Kittens are walking normally and start climbing. Social play is prevalent.

Teeth: Deciduous premolars come in.

What you can do: Continue the handling and socialization exercises.

5 to 8 weeks of age

Temperature: Normal range is 100.5 degrees to 102.5 degrees F.

Teeth: Kittens have an entire set of deciduous teeth by five to six weeks of age.

What you can do:

- The kittens are totally dependent on the environment you provide to stimulate and develop them. Play with objects increases around seven to eight weeks of age, so continue to add appropriate toys to the kittens' environment.
- Introduce the kittens to as many different people as possible — people of different shapes, sizes, colors, sexes and ages. Encourage the kittens to allow individual handling by different people: men, women and supervised children. Keep the visits short.
- Expose the kittens to mild sounds, different areas and surfaces, allowing them to investigate.
- As the main caregiver, you should continue the handling and grooming exercises.
- If you choose to, you can introduce the kittens to other animals while their mother is not around. Keep the visits very short and always supervise them. These visits should be calm and pleasant; a traumatic incident at this stage could have a lasting effect on the kittens. Keep in mind that kittens can carry diseases that can be transmitted to other animals.

8 weeks or older

What you can do:

- Protect the kittens from unpleasant or negative experiences. The kittens' environment should be designed to help them develop a sense of security.
- Continue to introduce the kittens to as many different people as possible.
- Continue the handling and grooming exercises.
- At this stage, you can gradually introduce some more intrusive noises, such as whistles blowing, hands clapping, bells jingling and the vacuum cleaner running. Play with the kittens as you introduce the noise in the background.

2-Litter box training for kittens and cats

When kittens are about four weeks old, they will begin to play in, dig through and explore loose, soft materials such as dirt or litter. As a result of this investigative digging, kittens begin to relieve themselves in these materials. So, kittens do not have to be taught by either their mothers or humans to relieve themselves in soft, loose materials, or to dig and bury their waste. Kittens are simply born knowing how to do it.

It's not necessary to take kittens to the litter box and move their paws back and forth in the litter. Doing so may actually be an unpleasant experience for them, causing them to have some negative associations with the litter box.

However, litter boxes that don't provide an acceptable place to eliminate (from the cats' point of view) may cause cats to relieve themselves elsewhere. That's why it's important to provide a litter box that meets the kittens' needs. You want the kittens to like the box and use it consistently.

Location

Most people want to put the litter box in an out-of-the-way place so they can minimize odors and loose particles of cat litter around the house. Often, the litter box ends up in the basement, possibly next to an appliance on a cold cement floor.

But that type of location is often undesirable to cats. Young kittens may not be able to get down a long flight of stairs in time to relieve themselves. And adult cats new to a home may not remember where the litter box is if it's hidden away in a distant location.

Another thing to keep in mind is that if your litter box is next to a sometimes-noisy appliance, such as a furnace, washer or dryer, cats may become startled when the appliance turns on. This may cause them to associate the litter box with the frightening noise, and they may then refuse to use the box in that location. Also, some cats like to scratch the surface surrounding their litter box and they may find a cold cement floor unappealing.

You can compromise by placing the litter box in a location — such as a closet or spare bathroom — that gives the cat some privacy but is also conveniently located. If you place the litter box in a closet, make sure the closet door is wedged open from both sides to keep the cat from being trapped inside or outside of the closet. If the litter box sits on a smooth, slick or cold surface, consider putting a small throw rug or mat underneath the box. The cats will have something to scratch and less litter will be tracked through your house.

Type and depth of litter

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters. Clumping litters are usually finer in grain than typical clay litter. With kittens younger than eight weeks, though, use only non-clumping litter. The reason for this is that very young kittens tend to taste their litter and play in it. If you use clumping litter, the dust from the litter can solidify in their respiratory or digestive tracts.

Different cats prefer different depths of litter, but most cats don't like litter that's more than about two inches deep. Cats don't choose areas for elimination where they sink into several inches of litter or dirt. It's not true that the more litter you put into a litter box, the less often you will have to clean it. Regular cleaning is essential, regardless of the depth of the litter.

Number of boxes

Try to have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, no one can be prevented from using the box because it is already occupied. It also keeps one cat from “guarding” the litter box and preventing other cats from accessing it.

Litter boxes can be placed in several locations around the house. This practice helps to train young kittens because there’s always a box nearby that they can get to in time to eliminate.

To cover or not to cover

Many cats don’t show any preference for a covered versus a non-covered litter box. But if a cat is very large, a covered litter box may not allow sufficient room for him to turn around, scratch and dig, and position himself in the way he prefers. It’s better to use uncovered boxes when training kittens because it is easier for them to get into and out of the litter box.

A covered box tends to provide more privacy and may be preferred by shy, timid cats. It’s a good idea to offer both types of litter boxes to discover which one the cat prefers. If you don’t want to buy a covered box in order to find out which one your cat prefers, a litter box cover can be made from an upside-down cardboard box with the flaps and one side cut away.

Cleaning the box

Litter boxes should always be kept clean. Feces should be scooped out of the litter box daily. The number of cats and the number of litter boxes will determine how often the litter needs to be dumped and completely changed. Twice a week is a general guideline, but you may need to change it more or less often, depending on the circumstances. If you notice any odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it is time to change all the litter.

When washing the litter box, do not use strong-smelling chemicals or cleaning products because the smell of vinegar, bleach or pine cleaners may cause the cat to avoid using the litter box. Washing with soap and water should be sufficient. Letting the container air-dry is also a good idea, but it will be necessary to have a back-up litter box while the other one is being cleaned.

3-Introducing a New Cat

The first step in creating harmony between your new cat and the existing cats in your household is to pick the best possible new cat for your household and lifestyle. All cats are individuals, and some may merge into your household better than others.

Cats who previously lived with another cat are more likely to get along with other cats than a cat who was an “only child.” Think about the things that the cats already in your home like to do. If they like to play, getting another playful cat is probably a good idea. If your cats prefer to lie in the sun all day, you’re probably better off fostering a cat who has similar habits. A young kitten or adolescent is probably not a good idea for a household with an older or grumpy cat.

Reducing the likelihood of problems

Even if the cat you are fostering is good with other cats, there is always the possibility of problems when introducing strangers to each other. There are several steps that you can take to reduce the likelihood of problems. Before bringing your new cat home, create a separate “territory” for her. This area should be equipped with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, access to natural sunlight, and comfortable resting places. Also, the new cat’s space should be smaller than your current cats’ territory.

Your other cats should have their own separate, larger territory. Make certain that both areas (the space for the new cat and the space for the other cats) contain multiple hiding places so the cats can easily retreat if necessary. Large cardboard boxes with holes cut in two sides make great hiding places. The second hole allows the cat to escape if cornered by another cat. The boxes will come into play once you start allowing the cats to interact directly, but it can be helpful to introduce the boxes first, so that the cats become accustomed to using them. Keep in mind that cats like to hide in high places, so remove fragile items from shelves or block access to the shelves.

Place your new cat in her space as soon as she arrives home. Spend a little time with her each day but spend more time with your other cats. They need to feel special right now, so they see the new addition as something that improves their lives. Play with all the cats regularly and watch them closely for signs of stress or anxiety, such as hiding, aggressive behavior, decreased appetite, and/or excessive vocalization. If you see any of these signs, your cat could be suffering from stress. If the signs persist for more than several days and/or if your cat stops eating, consult with your veterinarian. If any cat is showing mild signs of stress, give him or her time to acclimate to the new situation. If all the cats appear comfortable in their spaces, place the new cat in a different room (equipped with the same amenities) after two days, and allow your other cats to enter the new cat’s original territory. This will allow each cat to become accustomed to each other’s scent in a non-threatening way. Allow the cats to acclimate to their new areas until they seem comfortable there.

Cat pheromones

Here’s another way to introduce cats to each other’s scent: Cats have glands in their cheeks that produce pheromones. When your cat rubs her cheek against a wall, chair, or your leg, she deposits pheromones, which are chemical substances that can help to relieve anxiety and provide information about the cat who is producing those pheromones. Exposing each cat to towels that were gently rubbed on the other cats’ cheeks is a non-threatening way for them to start to get to know each other. Some cats respond very well to a synthetic pheromone (a spray or diffuser), a product that can be bought online or in pet supply stores.

Next, you can start allowing the cats closer access to each other by feeding them on either side of a closed door so that they can smell each other directly. Start feeding them several feet from the door on each side and gradually move the bowls closer to the door as the cats seem comfortable. The next step is to allow them to see each other through a baby gate or a door that is propped open two inches. If the cats are interested in each other and seem comfortable, allow them to meet. Open the door to the rooms between the cats about an inch and observe them closely.

If any cat shows signs of significant stress or aggression, separate them again and introduce them more slowly. Once the cats have acclimated to being allowed to sniff each other through a door, bring each cat into a large room, on opposite sides. If you have a willing helper, each person should play, pet and/or give food treats to one of the cats. The goal is to keep both cats occupied and happy, so they

don't have time to focus on each other. You want them to enjoy their time separated but in each other's presence.

Over multiple sessions, gradually bring the cats closer to each other. This exercise teaches the cats that they get special rewards in each other's presence, and that nothing bad is happening. With time, the cats will learn that they are not a serious threat to each other.

Creating a happy home

An anxious cat is more likely to have difficulty with introductions than a cat who is comfortable and relaxed. Since cats feed off our emotions, if you act calmly and use patience in the initial stages of the introduction process, you will probably increase your chances of having a harmonious household. The above recommendations are guidelines to increase the likelihood that your new cat will get along with the existing cat(s) in your household. If you have tried these techniques and your cats are still not getting along, please seek the help of your veterinarian or a behaviorist.

4-How to Introduce a Dog to a Cat

How to introduce a dog to a cat depends largely on the individual animals. Some dogs do fine living with cats; others simply cannot live safely with felines. And sometimes, a dog can live with certain cats – depending on their age, temperament, and activity level – but not others. Even if your dog has successfully lived with cats in the past, it is important to remember that each dog and each cat is an individual, environments are different, and each introduction is different.

Body language of dogs and cats

When introducing your dog to a cat, pay attention to the body language of both animals. If the cat's ears are pinned back or their tail is swishing back and forth, this is a good indicator that they're displeased.

You particularly want to be aware of dog body language that could be potential warning signs. If your dog has a strong prey drive (the inclination to seek out, chase, and potentially capture animals seen as prey), they might become very focused on the cat. The dog will stiffen, stare, and possibly bark or whine.

If you see these signs, do not let your dog near the cat. Ideally, the dog's body language will be loose and relaxed around the cat. It's alright if your dog pays attention to the cat, but you don't want to see a dog fixated on a cat.

In addition, a dog's interaction with a cat can change depending on the environment. Just because your dog is comfortable with the cat inside the house, that doesn't mean the dog will exhibit that same behavior outdoors. They might fixate on the cat and start stalking or chasing the cat when they are outside together. So be aware of your dog's body language around the cat in each new situation until you know how they're going to respond.

Methods for introducing a dog and a cat

There are many different ways to introduce a dog to a cat. If the first method of introduction you try doesn't work or you don't feel comfortable with it, try a different option. Even if the dog has had

experience with cats and the cat has lived with a dog before, proceed cautiously during the introduction.

It's best to have two people present — one to intervene with each animal if necessary. If you have more than one dog, introduce each dog separately to the cat.

Option 1: Slow and steady desensitization

If your dog is too fixated on the cat, you can try desensitization — the goal of which is to reduce your dog's reaction to the cat by gradually increasing exposure.

Put the cat in a room (e.g., a bedroom, bathroom, or spare room) with a tall baby gate across the door. The room you choose should be one the dog cannot access and doesn't need to access. For example, if the dog sleeps in the bedroom with you at night, don't pick that room for the cat. The idea is to separate them and only allow them to view each other during specific times.

Give the cat all the necessary supplies in their room: litter box, toys, food, and water. Keep in mind that cats are good at squeezing through small gaps and are also good climbers and jumpers, so make sure your cat can't get past the gate you put up. The gate needs to be a barrier that allows the cat and dog to see one another but does not allow them to access each other.

To begin desensitization, let the dog view the cat briefly through the gate, and then get the dog to focus on something else, such as playing with a toy or practicing cues. Sometimes it helps to keep the dog on leash so that you can move away from the cat when you try to refocus the dog's attention. Praise and reward the dog for being able to focus elsewhere. Continue to give the dog short viewings of the cat throughout the day.

Sometimes, even seeing the cat at first is too exciting for the dog. If this is the case, close the door and begin feeding each animal on their side of the door: The cat eats in the room right next to the door, and the dog eats on the other side of the door. This allows each animal to associate the smells of the other with something good: food. You can also swap out the blankets and bedding of each animal, giving it to the other. That way, the dog can get used to the cat's smell and the cat can get used to the dog's smell, without overstimulating either of them.

Hopefully, through this process of slowly letting the dog see the cat and get accustomed to the cat's presence, the dog will eventually become desensitized and lose interest in the cat. In some cases, the dog will lose interest in the cat within a couple of hours. But it can take days, weeks, or even months. Each dog (and each cat) is an individual and will learn at their own pace.

It is possible that your dog might not ever be able to safely share space with a cat. If you don't feel you can trust your dog around your cat, you should keep them apart, especially if you are not home or not able to supervise. Dogs can injure or kill a cat very quickly, and your dog can also be injured by the cat. Your first priority should be ensuring that everyone stays safe.

Option 2: Face-to-face introduction

This is a more fast-paced introduction. One person should hold the dog on a loose lead and watch the dog's body language. Someone else should watch the cat's body language. If the cat is not raising their back or hissing around the dog, they can be allowed to move around freely. A cat is rarely a threat to a dog, but some cats will be on the offensive when meeting dogs.

If the dog is calm around the cat, you can ask the dog to sit (or lie down) and stay, if they've been taught those cues, while the cat moves about freely, sniffing the dog if desired. The dog should be praised and rewarded for ignoring the cat. If the dog is too fixated on the cat (e.g., staring at the cat, has stiff body language, will not listen to you when you call their name) or if the dog lunges and tries to chase the cat, you should try a different strategy for getting them to share space, such as option 1 or option 3.

Option 3: Look at that

If the quick introduction did not work and your dog is not becoming desensitized to the cat, you might need to try some more structured training. By playing "look at that" (LAT) with your dog, you can help to teach them not to fixate on the cat. You'll be teaching your dog to look at the cat and then look back at you for a treat. Essentially, your dog will learn that it is more rewarding to not pay attention to the cat.

To start working on LAT, you need to figure out the dog's threshold while on leash: At what point does the dog notice the cat but still respond to you when you say your dog's name? That is the dog's threshold.

Each dog has a different threshold. For one dog, 5 feet away from the cat might be the threshold; for another dog, it might be 25 feet. You'll know you have gone past the threshold when your dog starts barking or lunging at the cat. Another sign that you're getting too close to the cat is if your dog starts moving more slowly, staring and stiffening. If you call your dog's name and don't get a response, move a few feet away from the cat.

Once you've figured out the dog's threshold, grab a clicker and some really delicious, pea-sized treats. If you don't have a clicker, a verbal marker "yes" will work just fine. Put a handful of treats in your hand, and keep the bag close by for later.

When you see the dog looking at the cat, click or use your verbal marker and offer a treat. The first few times, you might have to put the treat right in front of your dog's nose, but fairly soon your dog should start looking expectantly at you as soon as they hear the marker. That's because the marker (either a clicker or "yes") always means a treat is coming.

Start waiting your dog out, and only mark if your dog will look at the cat and then look right back at you. If they do, either click or use the verbal marker when your dog looks at you and then offer a treat. Only do this if your dog is able to remain calm and relaxed around your cat.

Once your dog is reliably looking at the cat and then looking back at you, you can slowly start moving closer and closer to the cat. If the dog becomes fixated on the cat when you move closer, you've gone past the threshold and need to move back.

As you train, your dog's threshold will decrease, which means that the two of you will be able to move closer and closer to the cat. Continue practicing LAT with your dog until they can be right next to the cat without an issue. How quickly your dog's threshold decreases will depend on you (how much you practice and the types of treats you use), your dog (because every dog learns at a different pace), and your cat's comfort level.

Introducing kittens and puppies

If you are introducing a kitten to a dog, keep in mind that kittens might not have any fear of dogs, so you must watch the dog carefully. Because kittens are small and want to run and play, dogs with a strong prey drive might be very excited by a kitten's movements.

Even if your dog is alright with your adult cats, it is important to watch closely when your dog is with a kitten. If your dog is young and high-energy, they could hurt or kill the kitten simply by trying to play. So, for safety's sake, keep kittens and dogs apart any time you are not watching them.

Introducing adult cats to puppies can sometimes be easy; a well-socialized adult cat might be fine with a puppy acting like a puppy. However, if your rambunctious puppy is chasing your shy cat, it is up to you to intervene. Until the puppy is old enough to have more self-control and has had some training, you will want to manage their interactions. You don't want your puppy to learn that chasing the cat is a fun game.

Baby gates can be used to keep the animals safely and comfortably apart. To help you keep an eye on your puppy, you can also put them on a leash. That way, if the puppy begins to chase the cat, you will be able to easily direct them away from that behavior.

Seeking help from a professional

Animals with good past experiences often adjust well and quickly to a new pet in the house. But if introductions don't go well, seek help from a professional dog trainer or behavior consultant. Remember to take things slowly and at your pets' speed. A negative interaction could ruin the relationship, and you'll need to start over.

5-Enrichment Ideas, Activities and Products for Indoor Cats

There are so many ways that you can enrich the life of your indoor cat. Keeping in mind that every cat is an individual, spend some time discovering what your feline particularly enjoys. Here are some things to consider acquiring to enrich your cat's daily life:

- **Cat furniture:** Provide cat furniture for climbing and scratching. You can buy ready-made cat trees and other furniture that range in cost from cheap to expensive, but you don't have to go that route. Some cats are just as happy with cardboard boxes and paper bags to investigate and play in. There are many terrific websites with instructions for making your own cat furniture; simply do a search for "how to make cat furniture." These objects help satisfy your cat's instinctive need to scratch and chew.
- **Wand toys:** Help cats feel like the predators they were born to be through interactive playtime with a wand (fishing pole type) toy. These toys come with different objects dangling at the end (e.g., toy mice, feathers), so try different types to see which "hunting" style your cat prefers. And be sure to make the toy on the end move the way that creature would move so the cat really feels like she's hunting. Wand toy playtime solves and prevents myriad cat behavior issues.
- **Catnip:** Treat your feline to some catnip and try catnip-filled toys, too. You can grow it fresh, but most cats prefer dried catnip.

- **Cat pheromone diffuser or spray:** Spray cat pheromone lightly on your cat's bedding and furniture or plug in a pheromone diffuser to fill the room. Feliway, a commonly used brand, is a synthetic copy of the feline facial pheromone, which is used by cats to mark their territory as safe and secure. Another brand of feline pheromone that comes in a collar is NurtureCALM 24/7.
- **Wheat grass:** Grow wheat grass for your cat to chomp on to satisfy his instinctive need to chew. You can purchase pet wheat-grass kits either online or at pet supply stores.
- **Cat drinking fountain:** Consider buying your cat a drinking fountain. Some cats don't like to drink water from a faucet, but they love their drinking fountain.
- **Bird feeder:** Place a bird feeder outside a window where your cat can watch the birds.
- **Feline window perch:** To offer your cat a better view and a spot to sunbathe, buy a window perch (available at pet supply stores) or make one yourself.

Allowing your cat to enjoy the outdoors safely

Here are some ways to give your indoor cat a chance to experience the great outdoors safely:

- **Walking a cat:** To allow your cat to safely enjoy time outdoors, teach her to walk on lead wearing a harness. You can buy harnesses made especially for cats either online or at pet supply stores. Be careful to fit the harness properly so the cat doesn't slip out of it. Train your cat inside your house to be relaxed in the harness and on the lead before adding outside adventures.

Walking a Cat

It's the latest trend: walking a cat on a lead. All the cool cats are doing it. Why walk a feline on a leash? Cats are curious creatures and any opportunities they have to explore the big wide world can enrich their lives. To help your indoor cat have safe outdoor adventures, you can teach her to wear a harness and walk on leash.

At Tasha's Furry Friends Sanctuary, our caregivers have found that walking outdoors lowers stress for many cats, making them happier and healthier. Keep in mind, though, that your cat should enjoy this activity, so if there is any indication that she is stressed by wearing a harness or being leashed up, this type of enrichment may not be suitable for her.

Steps to walking a cat

Step 1. The first step is to buy a harness and leash. There are many different types of harnesses made especially for cats. Choose one that is simple and fast to put on, but that your cat will not be able to wiggle out of. An excellent harness is the Kitty Holster; it's soft and lightweight, has wide Velcro closures and comes in several colors. If you want your cat to look especially stylish, the Kitty Holster company also sells a boutique line of handmade harnesses made of high-quality luxury fabrics. At Best Friends, we also use Coastal Pet's Size Right, which has a figure-eight configuration and only one buckle, and the Come with Me Kitty harness and bungee leash by Premier. All of these harnesses are available online or at pet supply stores.

Step 2. Next, you'll want to get the cat accustomed to the harness. Leave the harness in your cat's sleeping area for a few days so she can inspect it. Then, break down the steps necessary to put the harness on. Some of the steps might be these:

- Slide the harness over her head.
- Rest the harness on the back of her neck.
- Adjust the belly straps.
- Fasten the closures.

Reward her with treats after you perform each step, taking care to notice whether she's showing signs of anxiety. Speak in a friendly voice and tell her that this is the beginning of a big adventure. If the cat gets too anxious, take the harness off and try again the next day. It will likely take several sessions for your cat to get comfortable with the harness. If she isn't making progress, try consulting a behavior professional or look at alternatives, such as a cat stroller.

Step 3. Once she's comfortable dressed in the harness, clip on the leash and let her walk around indoors. Again, use treats and a soothing voice to make it a positive experience. During this indoor trial run, make sure you adjust the harness properly to fit your cat; you don't want it to be too tight or so loose that she can slip out of it.

Step 4. If your cat seems relaxed with indoor walks on lead, try it outdoors. For her first time outdoors, carry her outside and set her down in a safe and relatively quiet place, such as a fenced backyard. Make sure to leave the door open so she can retreat inside if she gets scared.

A cat on a leash

While your cat is on leash, let her go where she wants to go, but keep her well away from streets and traffic. Always keep the leash slack and don't ever pull on it. If your cat is startled by something, try to keep the leash slack until you can reach her, to prevent her from wriggling out of the harness. Until she is comfortable with being outside and is used to the sounds and sights, we recommend bringing along a towel to protect yourself should the cat become distressed and need to be picked up and carried back inside.

Before long, though, your cat will probably look forward to walks. Many of the cats at Best Friends who started out timidly are now pros, and outdoor excursions are an exciting part of their day.

- **Catios and other cat enclosures:** There are many other options for cats to spend time outdoors safely. Google "catios" or "cat enclosures" to get some ideas for structures you can purchase or build.

Cattery and Catio Info: Outdoor Cat Enclosures

What is cattery or catio?

They are outdoor enclosures for cats. Cats love to spend time in the fresh air and watch birds, bugs, and other animals. A cattery/catio provides a way for a cat to enjoy the outdoors without danger of being attacked by another animal, struck by a car, lost or stolen. They can be made with a variety of materials and constructed in a range of shapes and sizes. They can be free-standing or attached to a house or garage, inexpensive or higher end, plain or fancy, bought or built.

What do I need to know about catteries and catios?

There are a number of things to consider when building or buying a cattery or catio:

- Although you can build a cattery that is low to the ground, cleaning and spending time in the cattery yourself will be much easier if the cattery is built to human height. Plus, most cats love being up high, so you can provide structures for your cat to climb and perch on.
- If your cat enters the cattery through a window, the cattery will need to have a door to the outside so you can access it for cleaning, maintenance, and possible emergency care of your pet.
- The cattery will need a top — not necessarily a roof, but something to keep the cats in and everything else out. Chain link, hardware cloth, or even strong shade cloth, securely attached to the sides, should suffice.
- The cattery will need a firm base (hardware cloth at least) on the floor, to keep the right animals in and the wrong animals out.
- Provide a litter box. This isn't always necessary if the cat has access to a box in the house, but even so, many cats prefer to use the great outdoors. Even if your cat doesn't consistently use the litter box, make sure one is available for him. The box will need to be sheltered, either with a hood or with some boards or shelves, so it doesn't get wet in inclement weather.
- Provide enough food and water. Again, you'll need to shelter the food and water area. If you have ant or bug problems, look into bug-proof food dishes. If your cat spends a lot of time in her cattery, keep in mind that an outdoor cat needs more food to keep warm during chilly weather.
- Allow for extremes in the weather. Make sure the cattery has a shady area so your kitty doesn't get too hot in the summer. If your winters are cold, provide access to a heated room or garage; don't leave your cat out in a stand-alone structure in very cold weather.
- You can enrich the cattery environment by providing logs or posts for scratching. Hang bird feeders nearby (but not in the cattery), or plant a tray of grass for your kitty to frolic in. Be creative! You can make the cattery a nice place for your cat to hang out, and a pleasant place for you to visit.

Where can I get more information about outdoor cat enclosures?

You can search the Internet for “cat enclosures” or “catios” to find out what other people have done. Here are some useful websites:

- Catio Spaces at <https://catiospaces.com> has lots of photos and helpful information about different kinds of cat enclosures.
- If you want to build from a kit, you can order a kit for a cattery from C&D Pet Products at cdpets.com.
- If building a cattery is too ambitious a project for you, check out the many alternatives offered by Kittywalk Systems at kittywalk.com, a company that sells innovative cat enclosures and modular units that can be put together in a variety of configurations.

Are there any alternatives to catteries?

If you have a fenced yard, you might also consider “cat fencing” — netting that attaches to standard fences to prevent escapes and intrusions. Check out Cat Fence In at catfencein.com. Another type of cat fencing is Purrfect Fence purrfectfence.com.

- **Cat stroller:** Another option that works well for many cats is a pet stroller. Strollers can be purchased on many websites; simply do a search for “pet stroller.”

Enrichment activities for you and your cat

Here are some suggestions for activities that your cat and you may enjoy doing together:

- **Interacting with your cat:** Find out if your cat likes playtime or being gently combed or brushed.
- **Teaching a cat using treats:** Using treats as a reward, you can teach your cat to sit, come when called, or do any other behaviors you enjoy. The best method for doing this is clicker training.

A Guide to Clicker Training Pets

Clicker training dogs, cats, and other animals is a fun and effective way to communicate with your pets. Besides dogs and cats, you can train almost any kind of pet — including birds, rabbits, rats, and horses — to respond to the clicker. For example, you can teach your dog to sit or your bird to hop onto a perch using clicker training. The only thing you need is a clicker, some treats, and an animal friend.

What is the clicker training method?

Clicker training is gentler than many traditional training methods. In clicker training, you mark good behaviors by clicking the clicker the instant they happen, and then reward the animal. The reward can be a food treat, pets, praise, or anything else the animal enjoys. If the animal doesn't do the behavior you want, you simply try again and wait to mark it with the clicker. There is never any punishment for mistakes.

Clicker training uses a method called operant conditioning, pioneered by psychologist B.F. Skinner in the 1960s. Skinner observed that an animal will tend to repeat an action that has a positive consequence and will avoid an action that has a negative consequence. If a primary reinforcer (such as food) is used, the animal will become conditioned to repeat the action that produces the food. Using operant conditioning, Skinner trained rats to push a lever that released food pellets.

The clicker is used as a conditioned reinforcer, a cue that something good is coming. A form of clicker training (using whistles) was originally used with great success on dolphins. In the 1990s, clicker training for other animals really took off when trainers realized how easy and effective it was.

How does clicker training work?

Clicker training works by getting your pet to expect something enjoyable (like a treat) in return for doing something you ask. You use the clicker so that your pet will associate the treat with the clicking noise.

Here are some tips for how to clicker train your pet.

Choose the best clicker. There are several types of clickers, and you will want one that elicits a noise that does not startle your pet. Cats, for example, are sometimes frightened by a loud click. Some pets may even require a very soft clicking sound, such as that made with a ballpoint pen.

Charge the clicker. Next, you'll need to "charge" the clicker — that is, give the clicker a particular meaning so that your pet associates something good with it. Think of it like this: The first time you use an electric can opener to open a can of cat food, that sound means nothing to your cat. But after you've made that sound a few times, and a bowl of food promptly appears, your cat expects food when they hear the can opener. That's the type of association you want your pet to have when they hear the clicker.

To start, make sure you have your clicker and some soft treats on hand, cut or broken up into small pieces. Next, position yourself near your pet, someplace quiet where there aren't any distractions. Push and release the clicker, and then immediately give your pet a treat. Repeat this numerous times. You want your pet to expect a treat every time they hear the clicking noise.

Use the clicker to reward behavior. Next, when your pet does anything that you'd like them to repeat, you can "capture" that behavior by click-and-reward. You're sending the message "What you just did is good," and your pet will want to do that behavior again. It usually only takes a few repetitions for a pet to learn that a particular behavior elicits the click, followed by the reward.

For a behavior you would like your pet to do, you can do a click-and-reward when there's even small movements in the right direction. For example, if you are working on teaching your dog the "come" cue and they take two steps in the right direction, click the clicker and offer a treat. After they learn that this small step elicits a reward, withhold the click until they move a bit closer to you. Repeat this exercise until your dog eventually comes all the way to you. This process is called "shaping."

What if my pet doesn't do what I ask?

First, don't ever push, pull, or force your pet to do what you want. If your pet doesn't do what you've asked (like sit or come), don't click or offer a treat.

You can try to help them get the idea by holding the treat above their nose (to get them to sit) or by walking away from them and holding the treat out in front of you (to get them to come). This strategy is called "luring."

What other things can I teach my pet?

Once your pet has learned one behavior via clicker training and does it every time, you can start adding others. Don't try to teach more than one at a time. Here are some examples of other behaviors to click and give treats for: holding up one paw (high five!), sitting up on their hind legs, turning in a circle, or stepping up onto or down from different surfaces

Remember:

- Click while or immediately after the behavior happens.
- Always click first, and then offer a treat.
- Only click once.

Keep the practice sessions short. You want your pet to enjoy clicker training, so don't make it into a chore. Have fun clicker training your pet.

Watch the video to see how it is done with cats <https://youtu.be/xUHxSgn-Cts>

- **Cat food foraging:** In nature, the behavior that occupies cats' time the most is searching for food. Indoor cats have this same instinctual urge, so giving food puzzles to your cat helps satisfy this instinct. You can purchase food puzzles made specifically for cats or create your own. (Do a search for "DIY food puzzles for cats.") Another option: Hide little bits of food all around the house so your cat can do the normal feline "work" of finding food. It's an enjoyable activity that gives your cat something interesting to do and satisfies that particular aspect of a cat's nature.
- **Reading to your cat:** Read aloud or sing to your cats. Just remember that cats' sense of hearing is many times greater than ours, so soft, soothing sounds are best.
- **Fostering or adopting a second cat:** If you have only one cat, consider getting a second feline to give your cat someone to play with when you're not at home. Try fostering another cat first if you're not sure you want to adopt right away. If you foster, your cat can help choose the new family member.

Most important of all: Spend time interacting with your cat doing things you both enjoy!

Cat Enrichment: Toys, Puzzles and More

Providing for your cat's mental well-being is just as important as providing for her physical well-being. All animals, including pets, have natural behaviors and needs; to be healthy and happy, they must have opportunities to express those natural behaviors in appropriate ways. So, meeting your cat's mental and emotional needs helps her to lead a fulfilling life and have fewer behavior issues, and also allows you to forge a stronger bond with her.

How do you provide enrichment for your cat? There are a number of ways, such as giving her a variety of toys, providing perches, training and playing games with your cat, and much more.

Interactive toys

Interactive toys help strengthen the bond between you and your cat by letting you share fun and positive experiences, providing exercise for your cat and allowing your cat to feel like the predator she was born to be. All cats instinctively need to bite and scratch things, so providing appropriate toys for them to bite makes for a happy cat. Both you and your cat can have a great time playing with wand-type toys with toy mice, feathers or fabric attached to the ends. One popular product is the Da Bird Feather Teaser.

Some cats enjoy playing with laser pointers, chasing the point of light around the house. Make sure that your cat is eventually able to "catch" something while playing with the laser pointer, so she doesn't get too frustrated. Point the laser at a toy that your cat can then play with or a treat that she can eat.

Low-cost (or no cost) items are often a cat's preferred toys. Some suggestions are wadded-up paper (don't use aluminum foil because cats dislike the sound and feel of foil), cardboard boxes, ping pong balls and plastic rings from milk jugs. Throw a variety of objects for your cat to see which ones she's most interested in chasing.

Using vertical space for cat enrichment

Upright structures and elevated perches will serve your cat's climbing and clawing needs. To let your cat experience a bit of the outdoors while indoors, place perches, cat furniture (such as cat trees) or resting areas by the windows in your home. Cat furniture can be quite expensive to purchase, so you might want to try the DIY approach. For more information, search online for "DIY cat furniture" ideas.

Something as easy as clearing off the back of a couch that's near a window can expand your cat's horizons. A birdbath or bird feeder placed within sight of the window can increase her enjoyment. (Don't worry about the birds — they easily become habituated to their "admirers.")

One note of caution: Watch out for roaming cats in your yard, since the sight of those other cats can trigger stress and possibly urine marking in an indoor cat.

Self-play toys for cats

Self-play toys are those that your cat can play with on her own. Toys that encourage chasing and pouncing are typically the most enjoyable for cats. Some simple and cheap options are cardboard boxes, large paper bags (with the handles removed for safety) and crumpled-up pieces of paper. Other options are catnip-filled toys, springs, and wall- or door-mounted toys. There are also several battery-operated toys on the market to provide your cat with plenty of entertainment when she's alone.

Remember to watch her for a while after you give her a new toy, to make sure she is playing safely with it. When you notice your cat becoming bored with self-play toys, store them away in an airtight container with some catnip and rotate them in at a later date.

Watch this video for more ideas on cat enrichment <https://youtu.be/RncowQHauno>

Food puzzles

Foraging toys (also called food puzzles, puzzle feeders and treat dispensers) help satisfy a cat's natural instinct to search for food. The basic principle is that you fill up the toy with dry kibble, wet food or treats, and the cat learns to manipulate the toy to release the food. Some toys are stationary, such as interactive puzzle feeders like the Trixie 5-in-1 Activity Center, and some are designed to move around, like the Kitty Kong. Other examples of purchased toys are Trixie Mad Scientist for Cats and Nina Ottosson cat puzzle toys. Another type of food-dispensing toy is Pavlov's Cat, which releases dry food when a cat scratches the toy.

You can also make your own food puzzles. There are numerous videos and articles on the internet showing how to make DIY cat toys or puzzle toys. One of the easiest DIY options is to "scatter feed": Simply toss your cat's kibble on the floor and let her eat up all the pieces. To provide more of a challenge, hide small piles of her kibble around the house and let her search for her meal.

Catteries and catios

You can give your cat some safe time outdoors by building an outdoor enclosure (often called a cattery or catio) for your cat. Once your cattery is built, you can incorporate other sources of

enrichment, such as toys and cat trees, into it. And don't forget to routinely check the structure for stability and safety. To find out what types of structures other people have created, search the internet for "cat enclosures" or "catios."

Music for cats

Do a search online for "music for cats" to see what's out there. Many cats seem to respond positively to soft classical music. The cats here at the Sanctuary enjoy music such as Paul Cardall or Paul Dinning's interactive videos.

Teaching your cat tricks

Training, including teaching tricks, provides great mental stimulation for pets. Cats can be taught to respond to any number of cues, from "sit" to "down" to "wave." Using positive reinforcement is a great way to be successful with training your cat. Not only will it be more fun for both of you, it's also more effective and efficient.

One of the best methods using positive reinforcement is clicker training. It's also a fantastic method for trick training because it allows you to teach complicated tricks, such as piano playing.

Watch this video for more ways to help enrich your cat. <https://youtu.be/RyqD39XQHFE>

Cat comfort zones

Calming activities are just as much a part of enrichment as stimulating activities. In addition, every animal needs a "comfort zone" where he or she can go to feel safe and relax. Closets, open crates, high shelves, cat trees, the space under beds and rooms sectioned off with baby gates are great places to put a comfy cat bed or blanket to create a safe place. If your cat is resting in her safe place, make sure to leave her alone; this is her quiet time away from everyone. To enhance your cat's comfort zone, you may want to add calming products. Some examples are Feliway spray and diffuser or a NurtureCALM collar.

Keeping cats safe

Whatever types of enrichment you choose for your cat, make sure you play safe. Cats are capable of eating almost any object, and many objects can cause serious problems if they are ingested. For example, string toys should be used only with supervision. Remember to supervise your cat with any new toy to make sure it's safe.

Caution must also be used when playing with a laser pointer. The laser can damage your cat's vision, and some cats may begin to focus too much on the moving light. Also, keep in mind that any other pets or children in your house can potentially choke on smaller toys or pieces of toys. Consult with your veterinarian if you have any questions.

Modified from the Best Friends Animal Society of Utah and the Humane Society of Boulder Valley Cat and Kitten Handbook