

Socializing Kittens

Socializing kittens is probably one of the most enjoyable parts of raising cats.

Introducing them to people will make a huge impact on their lives. Even if they are barn cats and never leave the farm they were born on. Being friendly and relaxed with people will improve the quality of their lives. It will make it easier to find new homes for them when it is time for them to move on. It will also make having them more pleasurable for their owners.

Socializing is not only enjoyable, it is very important. Before a kitten is ready to leave home she should have learned that people are good to have around. Petting, playing and good food all happen with people. Purring, not hissing brings these good things her way. Fortunately, cats are smart and observant creatures. It is really very easy to instill this attitude in a kitten. It just takes a little bit of patience and perseverance on your part.

The socialization process can begin even before a kitten has opened her eyes. Pick her up and pet gently for a few moments then set her back down where she was. Your motions should be slow and gentle and your voice soft. Handle the kittens daily if you can. The mother will generally allow your attention to her kittens, especially if you give her petting and attention first. If she doesn't like your interest in her kittens, or if she has hidden her litter somewhere so that you can't find them right away, don't worry. You can begin the socialization process later when they are a little more independent and still get great results.

As the kittens get older and start to toddle around under their own power,

continue to regularly pick them up and pet them. Playing with them can also begin now.

Slowly dragging a string will catch any kittens' attention. Continue these sessions on a daily basis. You really don't have to make a big issue of it. Just go over to the kittens at odd times of the day, whenever you have a moment. Be sure that each kitten in the litter gets some attention.

Introducing the kittens to children and other adults is a good idea. Expand their definition of people to be more than just you. Remind the children that the kittens are just babies and need to be handled ever so gently. Always supervise children around pets until they understand how to handle them properly.

By the time the kittens are old enough to leave for their new homes they should be relaxed and happy around people. Purring happily when they are petted and reasonably patient when picked up. If the kittens are to be indoor cats, then they should be introduced to litter boxes and scratching pads or trees. A first visit to the veterinarian should be accomplished in a calm sensible fashion that will not alarm your kittens. If your kittens are young enough on their first visit, bring the entire litter along with their mother in a carrier. It will reduce stress on both the kittens and their mother. This may seem like a lot of extra effort but it will be worth it. What will be your reward for all of your work? Your reward will be a well socialized kitten that will be a joy to her new owner.