

KITTEN BEHAVIOR

By nature, cats are inquisitive and playful, which frequently gets them into trouble. Cat-proofing your home is essential for preventing accidents and illness.

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CAT SAFE:

- Physical punishment is the least effective method for training cats. Do not discipline your cat by hitting or striking it. This will only frighten or anger it, frequently leading to biting and clawing. Keep a squirt gun or bottle available. A squirt of water in the face doesn't hurt them but deters most kittens from doing things they shouldn't, such as jumping up on counters.
- Spend lots of time playing with your kitten. Drag a string around the house or tie an object to a string on a pole and wave it around while watching TV. Do not play with your kitten by wiggling your fingers or toes as this only encourages biting.
- Never force a kitten to stay in your lap if it wants to get down. Do not grab at your cat or scare it to prevent the development of biting reactions. Rough play also encourages aggression. Play gently using a toy, not your fingers.
- Confine your kitten to one room that has no plants or dangerous objects when you aren't home. Swallowing or choking on small objects is very common in kittens & cats. Beware of things such as rubber bands, pencil erasers, ear plugs, needles & thread, small toys, metal objects such as paper clips, fabric scraps, earrings, etc. Anything smaller than 1" diameter can potentially be swallowed and needs to be kept out of the kitten's reach. Don't give your kitten string or yarn to play with! These are among the most common and deadly of intestinal obstructions.
- Provide at least one scratching post for your cat to use. Even declawed cats like to stretch and knead their paws. Rubbing catnip on the scratching post will encourage its use. Keep the post in a place where the kitten spends a lot of time. Cats usually prefer a larger post so that they can climb up and down. Use your squirt bottle if you see him scratching in inappropriate places.
- To prevent chewing on cords and shoes, use unscented roll-on antiperspirant on these items once or twice each week. Cats don't like the drying, bitter taste and will soon learn to avoid these things.
- Aluminum foil can be placed around your plant pots and counter tops or tables, especially when you can't be home to use the squirt bottle! Cats don't like shiny, noisy foil and will generally avoid it. Many types of plants are poisonous to your pet, so it's best to keep them all out of reach. Double-sided sticky tape works well on couches and chairs.
- Be aware that the laundry room and kitchen contain many things that can be toxic to a cat when licked off the paws after walking through it. Laundry soap and bleach are prime examples. Many cats die each year after exploring the washing machine, taking a nap in the dryer, or jumping on or in a hot stove or oven. Cats are also very good at learning how to open cabinet doors.
- A collar and ID tag ensures your cat can be identified if it escapes outside. Use breakaway collars to prevent choking. Microchips are now available to permanently identify your cat. Be sure that the litter pan is accessible, in a quiet place, and changed frequently. If your house is large, it is best to have more than one box placed in convenient areas. It is recommended that there be one more litter pan than cats in multicat households. Avoid heavily scented litter—cats don't like perfume. Avoid changing brands of litter. Changing the litter every day is much healthier than using the new "scoopable" litters. Be sure to remove "clumps" daily if "scoopable" litter is used. Any time the cat eliminates outside the litter box, be sure to have the cat checked for a medical problem.