

CAT BEHAVIOR

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

To prevent problems:

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

Spend lots of time playing with your kitten so energy is used up more constructively. Drag a string around the house or tie an object to a string on a pole and wave it around while watching TV (put it away when you are done to avoid having your pet swallow or choke on the string). DO NOT play with your kitten by wiggling your fingers or toes - this encourages biting.

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

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

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

Provide at least one scratching post for your cat to use. Even declawed cats like to stretch and knead their paws. Rubbing catnip on the post will encourage its use, as will keeping it in a handy place where you and the kitten spend a lot of time. Cats usually prefer a larger post



that they can climb up and down. Some cats like wood or rope-wrapped posts instead of carpet. The more your kitten likes the post and the more your kitten is encouraged to use it, the less likely it will scratch at the furniture or rugs. Use your squirt bottle if you your kitten him scratching where it's not supposed to. Double sided sticky tape works well fastened on the arms or backs of couches and chairs - cats don't like the sticky feel on their feet and usually won't scratch there. Just peel the tape off when it's no longer needed.

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

Try putting aluminum foil around your plant pots to prevent digging, or lay sheets of it on counter tops or tables you don't want your kitten to walk on, especially when you can't be home to use your squirt bottle! Cats don't like the 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. Be especially vigilant in the laundry and kitchen areas. Laundry soap and bleach are toxic when licked off cat's paws after walking through it. Many cats die each year after exploring the washing machine, taking a nap in the dryer, or jumping on or in a hot stove or oven. Cats are also good at learning how to open cabinet doors!

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

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

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