

Four Fostering Tips to Raise Confident, Well-Adjusted Cats

Behavior problems are consistently among the top reasons cats get relinquished to shelters. Use these tips to help ensure your foster kittens are successful in their future homes. They're intended for kittens who are eating on their own (about four weeks old) though you can start earlier.



1. Make Carriers Happy Places

Acclimating your foster kitten to the carrier means vet visits and travel will be much easier – and it's super easy to do! Just set the carrier up in a spot where your kitten likes to hang out and keep it out all the time. Prop the door open, place some comfy bedding inside, and feed a treat in the carrier at least once a day. You can also get your foster kittens running in and out of the carrier during play time.

2. Keep Playtime Fun for Everyone

We all know kittens love to play, but sometimes they can be too exuberant, particularly if they don't have another kitten to play with. It might be cute now, but not so much when they're adults! Instill good play habits early:

- Always use toys during play vs. your hands or feet
- If the kitten tries to play with hands or feet, become a statue by folding your arms and looking away and wait a few minutes before giving any more attention
- Keep play interesting by rotating the type of toy
- Always allow the kitten to "catch" the toy a few times during play and end playtime with a yummy treat
- Avoid petting or picking the kitten up during or directly after playtime as this can inadvertently encourage the kitten to think hands are toys

3. Trim Those Nails

If there's one thing people prefer cats don't do, it's scratch up the furniture! One of the best ways to minimize that risk is to keep nails trimmed. Get your foster kitten used to nail trims now so it won't be a struggle when she's an adult. Start by touching one front paw, then offering a treat. Work up to extending the nail, always following any handling with yummy treats to keep it positive. If the kitten tries to pull away, let her go, give her a break, then go back a step.

A [close-up illustration and more tips](#) are here.

4. Make New Friends

Cats are notorious for disappearing as soon as company comes over. Help your foster kitten learn that new people are not scary by taking things slow. Pair the presence of new people with the kitten's favorite treat or toy. Consider timing a visit from a new person with meal time so the kitten is more likely to take treats. Start by having the treats and toys come from you or another familiar person. As the kitten starts to get comfortable, hand the treats or toys over to the new person. Work up to having the new person pet and hold the kitten. If your foster kitten seems afraid at any point, give her a break then go back a step. Remember, it is important that these early experiences are positive!