

NEW KITTEN CHECKLIST - EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR YOUR NEW KITTEN



Article checked by a vet

A new kitten in your home is exciting for the whole family, with many happy memories to come. If you're thinking of getting a new cat, make sure your decision is well-informed and not impulsive. Once your heart and mind are set, you can refer to our new kitten checklist and infographic below to ensure you have everything your kitten needs. In this article, we list out what to buy for a new kitten, from food to accessories, hygiene and healthcare essentials, as well as toys and furniture to keep your kitten entertained. We provide new kitten tips on how to prepare your home before your kitten's arrival, complete with a new cat checklist, to make sure they are safe and comfortable from the first day.

New kitten checklist

Before you bring home your new family member, it’s essential you have the things you need for a kitten. In this new kitten checklist, we provide a comprehensive guide on everything your kitten needs, from ‘what do kittens need?’ to ‘what do I need before getting a new kitten?’

Kitten food and accessories

If you’re wondering what to buy for a new kitten, kitten food and accessories should be first on your list.

Food and treats

Since they grow at a remarkably fast rate, kittens need specific nutrients to support their development. It’s essential you buy cat food designed for kittens to meet their specific nutritional requirements, so they can grow into a healthy adult cat.

Kittens can eat both wet and dry food, and we recommend a combination of both (known as mixed feeding) so your kitten is exposed to different flavours and textures from a young age. This will help ensure they don’t become fussy eaters as they get older, which will make your life easier as a cat owner if you ever need to change their food. PERFECT FIT™ Kitten Dry Food provides high-quality nutrition for your kitten and is an excellent option in their first year.

Kittens under 6 months do best on 4–5 small meals a day rather than a couple of large ones, gradually reducing the number of meals as they get older. Always check the feeding guide on your kitten food's packaging for exact portion sizes, as this varies by product and your kitten's weight.

Kitten treats are also a great way to bond with your kitten, as well as to help train positive behaviours, so choosing appropriate treats should be up there on your kitten checklist.

Food and drinking bowls

You also need an appropriate way to serve your kitten’s meals, as well as keeping your high-energy kitten hydrated. It’s best to purchase stainless-steel or ceramic bowls, to avoid bacteria that can fester in plastic bowls. Regardless of which style you choose, it’s essential to wash your kitten’s food and water bowls daily. Be sure not to leave wet food out for too long as it can attract flies, and provide fresh drinking water for your kitten everyday.

Cats also have a natural preference to eat and drink separately, so it’s a good idea to put their food and water bowls in different locations. If you have multiple cats, you should have separate feeding areas for each cat. In addition, since cats are very clean animals and don’t like to eat close to their litter tray, therefore you should position feeding stations away from their toilet area.

Kitten hygiene essentials

There are a variety of options for hygiene essentials you’ll need and deciding what to buy for your new kitten may take some shopping around.

There are a variety of litter trays available, and this should be a priority on your new kitten checklist. You can opt for a simple open tray, a litter box with a lid to provide more privacy, or an automatic self-cleaning litter tray to keep waste away. Unless you opt for the latter, you should also purchase a scoop to remove your cat’s poop and any soiled litter. Start with a low-sided tray so young kittens can climb in and out easily, with about an inch of litter, increasing the depth as they grow. As a general rule, have one litter tray per cat plus one extra, each roughly 1.5 times your kitten's body length. Use a non-clumping, unscented litter for very young kittens, moving to clumping litter from around 8–10 weeks old.

There are also different types of litter available and you can rely on CATSAN™ for high-quality litter products, including their Hygiene Plus Litter and their Natural Clumping Litter. Kittens need a clean litter box, as if it’s dirty they may avoid it, leading to accidents around the house. Make sure to keep the litter fresh daily and wash out thoroughly at least once a week.

Grooming supplies

A great new kitten tip is to introduce them to a grooming brush early. By regularly grooming your kitten’s fur, you can help remove any loose fur and prevent hairballs. It will keep your kitten’s coat healthy, and since they enjoy the sensation, it is a great bonding experience for you both. You should also buy a flea comb for a new kitten, which can help to spot fleas early.

Shampoo

Cats keep themselves clean by licking their fur and shouldn’t really be bathed as they find the experience very stressful. However, if your cat has a flea infestation you may consider bathing them with flea shampoo, which you can use as you wash your cat with warm water. Sphynx cats are a particular breed that do need to be bathed regularly to keep their skin

clean and avoid build-up of oils. Cats tend to not like water and most hate being bathed. This could lead to them objecting with their claws! As a result it may be best not to bathe most cats.

Kitten healthcare essentials

Kittens need great healthcare to thrive and below are some essential procedures that they require. Many cats develop dental disease by age 3, so it’s recommended to start introducing daily tooth brushing with a cat-specific toothpaste while they’re young kittens so they get used to it, and so you can maintain a daily oral care regime that cares for their teeth and gums.

First vet visits and vaccinations

Once you’ve brought your kitten home, registering them with your local vet should be top priority on your kitten checklist. If your kitten has not already been vaccinated, inform your vet so they can arrange appointments. Cats need to be vaccinated against the cat flu, feline infectious enteritis and feline leukaemia virus. Your kitten’s vaccinations will start around 9 weeks, and the second injection should be 4 weeks after the first. Make sure to keep up with annual boosters so your kitten stays protected, as well as regular health check-ups.

Check out the checklist below for what to do on your first vet visit, and what to expect with your kitten’s worming schedule:

- Bring any vaccination and health records from the breeder or shelter, plus a stool sample if your vet asks for one.
- Kittens should be wormed every 2 weeks from 3–8 weeks old.
- After this point, they need to be wormed monthly until 6 months of age.
- They can move onto an adult schedule of every 1–3 months depending on their lifestyle after this point.

Worm and flea treatments

Your kitten needs to be protected from worms and fleas as both can be dangerous for a kitten’s young body. A heavy flea infestation can put your kitten at risk of becoming anaemic, whilst parasites will steal essential nutrients your kitten needs to grow. Flea and worm treatments are essential for a kitten. It’s best to use vet-prescribed treatments as these will be age and size appropriate. Follow your vet’s instructions for regular use to ensure your cat stays flea and parasite-free.

Neutering and spaying

Whilst it is your choice whether or not to neuter/spay your kitten, it is strongly advised you do in order to manage the overpopulation of stray cats. Female kittens are very fertile and can become pregnant as young as 4 months old. Kittens can be neutered/spayed from 3 months, but vets usually prefer to wait until 4-6 months, so check with your vet and book in the appointment as soon as possible to tick it off your kitten checklist.

Kittens travel and accessories

To bring your kitten home, as well as preparing for when/if you decide to let them outside, you'll need some travel accessories.

Kitten travel carrier

A travel carrier should be the first thing on your new kitten checklist. When you pick up your new kitten, you'll need a carrier to transport them to their new home safely, as well as when you take them to any vet appointments. Make sure the travel carrier is spacious enough for your kitten, and place a towel or blanket inside to keep them comfortable - it's best if this is one they are already familiar with from their shelter or previous home.

Collars, ID tags and Microchipping

Even if you are not planning for your new kitten to go outside any time soon, a cat collar and ID tag are things you need for a kitten in case they ever get out by mistake. Make sure the collar has a breakaway clasp, so if it gets caught on anything it will automatically release and prevent your kitten from injury.

In the UK, you are legally obliged to have your cat microchipped with the owner address and contact details registered in the database. If your kitten ever gets lost, these measures can help them be returned home safely.

Leads and harnesses

Kitten leads and/or harnesses are another thing you can buy for a new kitten, as they are a great way to introduce them to the outdoors before they're ready to venture out by themselves. An important new kitten tip: kittens usually prefer a body harness, as a leash can be uncomfortable around their neck. The harness will keep your kitten safe whilst exploring outside, and you will feel more reassured too. Most cats will instinctively not like being on a harness or collar and lead but for the purposes of introducing them safely to the garden, it can be a useful tool, if they'll tolerate it.

Kitten’s comfort and enrichment

Your kitten will need plenty of physical and mental stimulation to keep them occupied, and a place to rest when they’re tired.

Cat beds

Kittens love their sleep and can snooze up to 18-20 hours a day, so a comfortable bed is one thing you will need for a kitten. A good new kitten tip is to wait until your kitten is home to see which spot they choose to sleep. You can create a makeshift bed using a large cardboard box with a cushion or blanket, and purchase a fancier cat bed afterwards if you wish. Make sure to place your kitten’s bed in a quiet corner, so your kitten has privacy and can rest peacefully.

Cat furniture

There are various cat furniture items on the market, some more extravagant than others. Instead of splashing out, you can create a cat activity centre at home, or otherwise a small scratching post will suffice if you want to save space. You’ll find this on most kitten checklists as scratch posts encourage your kitten to stretch out to their full length, as well as a place to sharpen their claws. Kittens tend to prefer rope or sisal over cardboard or carpet, and posts should be tall enough for a full stretch (at least 3 feet) with a sturdy, narrow base so they don't topple. Start with a shorter post for very young kittens to reduce the risk of falls, and swap this out for a taller one as they get older. This should prevent them from scratching your sofa, although they may need some training in the beginning.

Toys

Kittens have lots of energy, so toys are an essential on your new kitten checklist as they are a great way for them to burn this energy and stay entertained. You should only provide safe cat toys, whether it’s a ball that rattles, a rolled up ball of paper or a ping pong ball. Spend time playing games with your kitten to show love and affection, and reward them with treats. Remember to supervise your kitten when playing with toys, and avoid toys with small or breakable parts, as well as yarn, thread, rubber bands, hair ties, corks, and twist ties, all of which can cause serious internal injuries if swallowed. Yarn and wool are not suitable toys as they pose a strangulation risk when cats roll around on them.

Preparing your home for your new kitten

It’s important to properly prepare your home before your kitten’s arrival so it’s a safe and comfortable environment for them to explore and settle in. Below are some great new kitten tips to help.

Installing a cat flap

Once your kitten is home, you may be wondering when kittens can go outside. It's important to keep your kitten indoors for at least 4 weeks so they become familiar with their new environment and grow a strong attachment with you. You should also wait until they have been vaccinated, flea-and-worm treated, and neutered/spayed. When you've prepared your kitten for the outside world, you can install a cat flap so they can come and go as they please. There are microchip-activated cat flaps available, so only your kitten can use it.

Removing safety hazards

Removing any safety hazards should be a priority on your kitten checklist. Kitten-proof your home to remove any sharp objects, exposed wires, balls of string, batteries, things that can fall off shelves, harmful chemicals, toxic plants or tiny things that can be swallowed. Lilies are especially dangerous, as all parts, including the pollen, are highly toxic, along with daffodils, tulips, peonies and poinsettias.

Removing hazards extends also to adequately kitten-proofing your home or apartment. Some apartment-specific proofing includes securing blind and curtain cords and checking balcony and window safety.

Kittens are naturally curious creatures, so it's important they are safe whilst exploring all corners of your home. This also means keeping medications and food out of reach in a cat-proof cabinet, as these are some common household hazards.

Create a safe space

Welcoming your kitten can be an exciting time for you, but your kitten may feel wary in the first few days. It's important to create a safe space for them so they feel comfortable to explore when they are ready. You can keep them in one area to begin with, until they're ready to explore other parts of the house. For the first 24 hours or so, you should let your kitten settle into their safe space undisturbed, keeping noise and visitors to a minimum to make them feel safe.

There are feline diffusers you can purchase which release a scent similar to pheromones, which your kitten will recognise from their cat mother. A pheromone spray is another thing you can buy for a new kitten to spray on their bedding which should help settle them in.

There are many things to consider before bringing home a new cat, including the cost of owning cats as you can see from our extensive new kitten checklist above. This is why it's essential to make an informed decision, as kittens are a long-term financial commitment and need to be looked after with care. Hopefully our kitten checklist provides some guidance on what to buy for your new kitten, and your new feline friend will settle down in no time.

New to cat ownership? Read our full guide on bringing a cat or kitten home for more advice on the first few months.

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1. **When should you take your new kitten to the vet?**

   Usually, it is the breeder who will take your kitten to the vet at around 6 weeks old, as they don't leave their mothers until they are 12-14 weeks of age. It's still best to speak with your vet once you get a new kitten, though, as they will advise on appointments for vaccinations and microchipping, as well as a general health check-up.

2. **Where should a kitten sleep on the first night in a new home?**

   On the first night in their new home, it's best if a kitten sleeps near you. Your kitten will likely be nervous in their new environment, and by keeping them close they will feel reassured and begin to develop a strong attachment with you.

3. **What is the first thing you should do when you get a kitten?**

   The first thing you should do when you get a kitten is provide food, water, litter and bedding, and give plenty of space at first to avoid overwhelming them. You should open the door of their travel carrier, so your kitten can come out by themselves when they're ready.

4. **What is the 3-3-3 rule for kittens?**

   The 3-3-3 rule is an adoption guideline that suggests once you bring a new cat or kitten into your home, it takes 3 days to decompress, 3 weeks to learn routines, and 3 months to fully integrate.

5. **Can I leave my 8-week-old kitten alone at night?**

   No, you shouldn't leave an 8-week old kitten alone at night. You can have them sleep in an enclosed space in your room, but leaving them entirely unmonitored is unwise

as very young kittens are prone to getting stuck and chewing things they shouldn’t. It’s also important for their development and sense of security that they do not feel separated from their family.

This is not a likely scenario, though, as cats don’t leave their mothers before 12 weeks of age, so having an 8-week-old kitten is unlikely.

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