

Kitten Behavioral Challenges

BEHAVIOR SERIES



To any cat enthusiast, kittens are irresistible, adorable, sweet perfection in a furry little ball. But when adopted, their angelic appearance can soon be replaced by the realities of owning an energetic young kitten. There are ways to prevent this adoration from turning into frustration. Gaining a better understanding of the feline species and providing for your kitten's needs with appropriate training and structure will ensure a smoother introduction of your new kitten into your family.

Climbing and Jumping on Counters

It is normal behavior for a cat to explore its environment and to perch on high surfaces

- Provide acceptable vertical perches for the kitten such as:
 - Commercial scratching posts/cat trees
 - Shelving
 - Window sill perches
 - Furniture/boxes
- Encourage kittens to use these perches by playing on/near them, feeding treats on them and praising the kitten when they are on them.
- To discourage the kitten away from unacceptable surfaces e.g. counters/tables, do the following:
 - Keep counters free of food or other attractants like flowers/plants
 - Place double stick tape on the surface
 - Install a remote pet deterrent

Nighttime Circus

- Kittens are naturally very active at dawn and dusk, and need lots of activity and exercise during these times. If they don't receive enough activity they will try to play during the night and keep you awake.
 - Provide lots of activity and exercise to your kitten particularly early in the day
- If your kitten tries to wake you and play with you during the night the best thing to do is ignore the behavior
 - Giving your kitten attention will just encourage night-time activity
 - Close the bedroom door and use ear plugs until the night-time play behavior ceases

Play Aggression

- Cats, especially kittens, need appropriate outlets for play, if these needs aren't being met, kittens may use their owners as play targets
- Over exuberant play directed at inappropriate targets may result in injury to people or other pets; when this occurs it is called play related aggression
- Kittens need to have daily interactive play using appropriate cat toys. Any play that results in the owner's body being the target of the play should be avoided
- Ways to reduce play aggression
 - Initiate regular play periods with your kitten
 - Use toys, not human body parts, for play
 - If your kitten starts to pounce on your legs/hands, be prepared with a toy (e.g. carry a ball to toss) and try to redirect the attack onto a toy
 - Avoid giving any type of reward for the play aggression; keep in mind that any reaction from you (e.g. a scream/pulling away) is likely to be considered rewarding for the kitten. Silence and stillness is the best response to play aggression
 - Do NOT deliver any direct punishment e.g. hitting the cat, as this may injure the kitten or induce fear/defensive aggression
 - Be consistent, it is unfair to allow the kitten to wrestle with your hands some of the time but not at other times

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

