



## Four secrets to a well-adjusted new kitten

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

Did you know that kittens learn and develop a big part of their adult personality by 16 weeks of age? The positive – or negative – associations that young cats develop during the critical stage of brain development can last a lifetime for better or for worse, so let's make it better! Remember, do not force things! Make sure these exposures are done in a way that is comfortable for your kitten. Do not keep exposing them to a new experience if they are scared. Talk to the Evergreen Team today for guidance!

### ***Secret 1: Handle your kitten – literally***

Make a point to touch your kitten all over. Do not be forceful or push to the point of struggle, however. Touch and hold gently and reward the acceptance with a special treat. (Kittens love to be stroked on both sides of their faces – maybe that is all the reward they will need!) Remember, over time, you will need to be able to trim toe nails, clean ears and brush teeth. If your new kitten enjoys these rituals, life is better for the both of you!

### ***Secret 2: Socialize with your kitten***

Let your kitten meet people of all shapes, sizes and mannerisms to learn that there is nothing to fear from people. Introduce children, men, women and even people with hats, sunglasses or costumes. Do not forget the treats and pets to make this fun!

### ***Secret 3: Keep the peace (of mind)***

Your cat will need to visit Evergreen Veterinary Hospital annually, may need surgery (such as spaying or neutering), and unfortunately, may even become sick. You can make these experiences a little better by training your kitten early not to fear the cat carrier. Buy one that you like too, because you will need to keep it where you can both see it and think of it as an everyday thing. Leave it in the cat's favorite area with the door open and hide treats inside or even feed meals in there. Anything you can do to create a positive association with the carrier is a step in the right direction. The best carriers are those with rigid sides that can open from the top or front. That way, your kitten can feel safe in the exam room during their physical exam.



***Secret 4: Adventure with your kitten***

You and your cat will experience all life has to offer together, but the experiences will not be as fun if your kitten is afraid or difficult to handle. Take your kitten wherever you can for exposure to new places. Visit Evergreen Veterinary Hospital on a day just for a happy visit and some yummy treats! Be sure to check with the Evergreen Team some of the places you plan to visit to ensure that they will be safe for your kitten. Do not forget to make the carrier a safe and wonderful place, because that is also the way *you* can travel the safest!

Science shows that it is easier for brains to remember bad experiences far better than good ones, so make sure your foundation for your kitten's brain is filled with terrific associations. You can avoid big problems in the future, and let's face it, handling and spending time with your kitten is a ton of fun!