

**Please read this guide in full, we have very successful, floppy, snuggly, and positive go-home experiences with our Ragdolls this way!**

I have helped settle many kittens into their new homes over the years now - as well as having experience with bringing in kittens from other catteries from time to time, and needing them to bond and adjust properly here.

The first part of this Bonding Guide is an overview, and at the end I have a detailed list of specific recommendations.

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## **Bonding and Behavior Guide: How to Create Affectionate, Cuddly, Well Behaved Ragdollies**

**The first two weeks at home are critical for bonding with your Ragdoll.**

During this time your kitten will learn how to reliably use the litter at your home (they are fully litter trained here, but you need them to get 'used to' their litter box at your home now), they will also learn how to snuggle with you (this is a process I do my best to prepare them for, but they need to learn how to snuggle \*with you\* and your family), and they need to learn to expect meals from you.

**The best way to bond with your kitten, keep them safe, and have them grow into a loving, well adjusted personality is to provide them with one safe kitten proofed room / area, and to keep them in it the majority of the time, especially for the first two weeks.**

When bringing home your new kitten, please remember there are a few contractual requirements that we have agreed to:

1. Kitten must be isolated from all other pets for at least 7 days.
2. Kitten must be kept in kitten proofed spaces for at least 14 days.
3. Any time spent outside their kitten proofed spaces must be directly supervised for at least the first 60 days.

**These are critically important for their own safety.**

**Whether you have to leave to go to work, the grocery store, or even if you are home but preoccupied doing other things - any time you cannot keep a direct eye on your kitten, they should be in their safe space until they are at least 6 months of age.**

With our first litters, I was more relaxed with some of these requirements, which sadly lead to a few issues. **Thankfully nothing has been fatal, but some of these go-home issues have lead to emergency vet trips (like we had one case of poisoning!).**

I am now very careful to explain to each family why there is the importance of following these guidelines.

**So please be careful with your kitten and follow our guidelines, they are built from experience to protect your kitten - remember they are still a very young baby when they go home with you!**

To start:

**Set up a safe 'kitten room' for your kitten to come home to!**

Your kitten needs a safe, kitten-proofed space to live in, and should not have unsupervised access to the whole house until they're at least 6 months old. **Cats and kittens naturally enjoy having a smaller territory they can 'rule' over. Letting your kitten explore too much right away will overstimulate them!** Cats really need time to settle in, calm down, and then once they feel secure in their environment, they will focus on you and will bond with you properly. By providing one (or two) consistent, safe rooms for them to spend their time in over the first few months together, you will really get to bond properly with your kitten, and you can rest easy knowing that they are safe whenever you cannot watch them.

**At this age, even the sweetest, most laid back Ragdoll kitten will prioritize exploring and playing over snuggling. They'll completely forget you exist if overwhelmed with new places to climb and explore!**

So, in order to bond...

Bring them home to a room small enough they can easily explore - get comfortable - and then let them get a little bored... **This will make YOU the most exciting part of their world!**

This process makes them affectionate, and they'll prioritize snuggling with you over anything else!

We personally have one room that is the 'quarantine room' and then our bedroom totally 'kitten proofed' – so every new kitten we've had has gone through this process and it works really well, especially if introducing kitten to an older cat (or cats!) already in the household. Our new kittens either are in their 'quarantine room', or in our bedroom until they're old enough and bonded enough to begin being introduced to the whole house.

**We always try to make sure that a new kitten has the option to sleep in bed with us, this is so helpful for bonding!**

**Choosing a room is up to you depending on your lifestyle and layout of your home, but bedrooms, office rooms, and large enough bathrooms make great kitten rooms!**

It is normal if you want to just pick one spot for your kitten, like an office or a bedroom! Bedrooms make great kitten rooms, as it's easy for most people to set up and spend long hours hanging out in their room with the kitten, and then there are great opportunities to snuggle up in bed!! If you have children who are old enough to be gentle and sleep through the kitten being playful at night and can tolerate occasional litter smells, it can be great to have a child's room be the kitten's room too, this can be great for spending lots of time together and bonding. (Having a litterbox in a bedroom really shouldn't smell as long as it's cleaned daily!)

If you're not open to having the kitten sleep with you though, or you'd prefer to not have litter in the bedroom at all, it is fine to have one room set up just for kitten (like a bathroom), and then your bedroom kitten proofed as well, so kitten can be in the bathroom at night to sleep, or to use the litter, but then can spend time with you snuggling and playing in your bedroom while being supervised, as bathrooms aren't always comfortable to 'hang out' in!

**A kitten room can be any room with a door that closes and has enough space for:**

- Kitten's food and water
- The litterbox
- At least 1 or more cat beds, scratching posts, small cat trees / hammocks
- Space for you (and / or any children / family members) to sit/lie down and hang out with them comfortably for long periods of time

I really do so much here to socialize the kittens, to help them learn to love people, love snuggling, and to be very affectionate - **HOWEVER!! You really have to set up your home and YOUR HABITS so the kittens keep and GROW those affectionate habits during the first few weeks with you!**

**Please sit with them and read a book or set up a tablet or laptop to watch TV, or a movie with them. Please hold them and wrap them up in a blanket- over and over, until they relax and hang out in your lap. Please feed them by hand, or at least feed them in your lap the first week as much as possible.**

Any chance you get, please sit with them, if you have kids, have your kids sit with them, hold them and kiss them and play with them in their kitten spaces as much as you can.

**The first two weeks home with you are the most critical time for setting up the habits you want to keep with them. Just two weeks of your full attention, making as much time as possible for them, will pay off in years of affection and love.**

So spend time with them in their kitten room, or in your bedroom, and have them on your lap \*as much as possible\*. **Hold them and hang out with them as much as you can – and after the first couple of days you can carry them around the house with you as much as you want. Have them on the couch with you watching TV – but only if they will stay in your lap or arms. Carry them to the bathroom while you brush your teeth or shower – have them in the kitchen while you’re waiting for something to finish cooking, etc, keep them with you as much as you humanly can.**

And then if and when you can’t have them with you being supervised – they go in their kitten proofed room.

**As days go by they will get bored with their room, and may cry and miss you – and THAT IS A GOOD THING!** So when you are able to get them out, or go in there to sit with them, they will be **so** glad to see you. It’s a very good process for bonding. Absence makes the heart grow fonder is a very real thing lol!

I have a really close bond with each of my cats this way – and I really hope this can set you up to have close bonds with your kitten as well. 😊

**Once that first week or two weeks is over and you’ve carried them around the house and shown them everything on your own time – you can then start to let them loose to explore on their own.** By this point, any adult cats in the home should be used to their presence too – this would be a good time to let them meet if they haven’t already.

(You’ll know when you’re bonded and when you trust them enough to let them out haha, but I really recommend at least waiting 5+ days before letting them out without holding them. Holding them and carrying them around while you show them the house really is a great way for them to learn that being held = going on a fun adventure and is a good thing!)

I really recommend keeping this space kitten proofed for at least their first 6 months at your home, even if they’re fine being out and about / generally unsupervised while you’re home.

They can cause so much mayhem and damage when unsupervised if no one is there to stop them, they can also poison themselves by getting into things they shouldn't.

**If you have to grocery shop, or go to work, etc, having a safe place for them to spend that time is really priceless. You'll know when you can start trusting them home alone on their own – but generally kittens are pretty chaotic / unpredictable for those first 5 – 6 months.**

**The kitten room is also really helpful for time-outs!** Cats **are** very smart and **do** understand 'NO' way more than some people give them credit for.

These time-outs are meant to **reinforce** good behavior! View it more as setting a boundary than as a discipline or punishment (never yell at your cat or hit them!)

**As kitten begins to spend time out in the main house with you, place them back in their kitten-proofed room when they engage in bad behavior to teach them boundaries.**

**For example - If they go on the counters or kitchen table? Say 'no!' firmly, and shoo them off. If they go up again, put them back in their room for the entire day - not just a few minutes. Love on them and play with them in their room, don't withhold affection, but don't let them out again for the rest of the day / evening / night, even if they meow when you aren't in there with them.**

**They'll learn very quickly that if they want the privilege of being out and about with you - they also need to have good manners!**

You can do this with anything 'naughty', from climbing on curtains, getting into things they shouldn't, etc - any bad behavior should be corrected or told 'no' once, and after that it is back to their kitten room.

THIS IS NOT MEAN and it's not meant to be something where they are 'punished' - It helps kitten learn that being part of the house requires good kitten manners, and helps prevent the horror stories you hear of tyrant kittens running a household and turning into nightmare cats.

I really haven't had to time out any of my cats more than a few times as they grow up and get used to the household rules – I've only used it in situations where I've already told them 'NO', and they still go back to the bad / dangerous behavior (like moving them away from a cord they want to chew on and showing them a toy they **can** play with, and then 2 seconds later they are

back trying to chew on that cord... well then its time for a time out!)

**So I really recommend using these next few weeks to kitten proof! Start with your bedroom / kitten room - and then extend the process to the rest of your home.**

(See our go-home guide for more in depth kitten proofing and cleaning recommendations!)

- Block off under beds—use plastic partitions, towels, or cardboard to prevent kittens from getting stuck.
- Secure or hide any electronic cords within biting range. Use zip ties or other methods to keep cords out of reach.
- Ensure there's no space for them to squeeze under doors. This can be an issue in older homes.
- Remove any breakable items or knick-knacks.
- Provide safe climbing options, such as a **small** cat tree, so they have a designated space to explore without getting hurt.

Finally, you'll want to think about socialization for the kitten! Once they're comfortable in your home, after at least the first two weeks to fully settle in, have guests come over to meet the little one, have a party or movie night for kitten to meet people and pass them around for kisses and cuddles and playtime, and have fun.

The more you put into them, the more they give back. Just try to think like a mischievous kitten, and remove anything that looks especially dangerous or chewable. Just get thinking now about getting things kitten proofed, it's really so much better to be prepared before they come home so you can just focus on relaxing and bonding with your new baby!

**Thank you for your time! I know this is a longer read, but I hope it's something you can save and come back to if needed while getting ready for your baby! As always, please let me know if you have any questions!**

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**Here is our detailed bonding guide, each section is numbered for easy reference later!**

### **1. How to Choose a 'Kitten Room':**

Pick a room that can be fully closed off - and will have space for kitten's food, water, a litter box, a cat tree/scratching post, and a comfy spot for you to sit and spend lots of time with your kitten. This can be a bedroom, office room, bathroom, etc! **This space will be their "territory"**

**for the first months, where they will be safe and secure.** It's also important that you'll be comfortable spending time with them here! Where you decide to put them will really depend on your home / apartment / condo, lifestyle, and preferences!

If needed, you can have two kitten proofed rooms, especially if you don't feel comfortable having the kitten sleep with you. If you are a light sleeper and prefer to set up a secondary room for kitten to sleep in that's totally fine - I'd just advise to kitten proof your bedroom to start with, and try to have the kitten sleep with you for the first 3 nights. This is a great source of comfort for them, and will really help them bond to you!

Many people may have their bedroom or an office set up for the 'primary' kitten room, and then also set up a bathroom with separate food / water / litter / cat beds for the kitten to go into for bedtime only.

## **2. The First Week Home:**

**Days 1 - 3:** Introduce them to their room. Be very affectionate, and be prepared to spend lots of time with them here. They should stay in this room (or go between the primary room / bedtime room) ONLY. They need time to decompress, and to view the primary/secondary rooms as THEIR territory. **Be prepared and plan to sit / lay down / snuggle for long periods of time with them these first three days.** If you have children, be prepared to spend lots of time with them in this room, doing quiet activities like reading, drawing, homework, or quietly using a tablet, etc. Be very warm and kind to your kitten, say their name frequently, praise them, and give them lots of pets. If they seem timid, just sit with them and remain calm, don't try to grab at them. You can use their play toys to encourage them to come out of their shell and start engaging with you!

**Remember that a key part of bonding happens when you are hanging out in the same room as them, but not actively playing with the kitten.** As they finish exploring their new room, they'll get bored and start to come to YOU for entertainment! When they start seeking out your attention, like hopping into your lap and nudging you with a headbutt - that's when you know the bond is growing. I often sit with our kittens while working on my laptop or by working social media on my phone, and after a little while, they'll come to me for attention, or they'll settle down near me or on me while I work. This behavior continues as they grow, leading them to seek snuggles and lap time even as adults.

**If they aren't completely comfortable and bored in the room they're in - they will rarely/ never come up to you naturally - they will always prioritize exploring and adventure over snuggling at this age, so this is why I stress having a room set up for them in this way.**

It's important to balance active playtime with quiet moments where your kitten can initiate interaction. I'll even remove toys and distractions from our nursery / bedroom sometimes, so the kittens eventually get bored and come to me for attention.

**Days 4 - 7:** You can begin showing the kitten around your home in a very supervised way. Carry your kitten through your home, do not just let them out. Carry them and show them around - show them every room of the house, and then go back to THEIR ROOM to sit down and play / snuggle / hang out. If you have to go shower in the morning, take them with you! Then put them back in their room once you are done. When you're brushing your hair, take time to bring them with you and brush their fur! If you're open to it, a great bonding tool is to brush your hair, and then brush the kitten with your brush. This will get 'your scent' on the kitten, and they really seem to enjoy it! Just 5 minutes of this a day is great for bonding.

So bring them along with you on 'supervised' adventures like this, slowly showing them around, holding onto them so they can't run all over, and this will really get them used to cuddling and being held. They may start to have an attitude by the end of the week - like 'Oh put me down I want to explore!' and this is a good thing haha, it means they're learning to trust you! They'll remember as they grow up the fun times they had being carried around by you as a baby - it'll pay off even if they seem antsy and ready to run / explore, I really recommend not letting them fully run around for at least that first week! Let them come with you around the house - and then put them back in their own room.

For this first week, it really is so important to keep your kitten in their room the majority of the time!

By the end of the week, they'll start meowing for you when you leave their room, and this is a great sign! When you come back to snuggle or sit with them, they'll be eager for your attention and affection. This process is essential for long-term bonding.

### **3. How to create a floppy, holdable, loveable Ragdoll!**

Yes they're born with floppy traits, but it's also something that you have to encourage them to keep!! The best way to do this?

#### **Pick up and hold your kitten frequently - up and down, up and down!**

Many times a kitten will act temporarily annoyed that you picked them up, and may act like 'mommmm (or dad!) I was in the middle of something!' - but if you hold them and pet them, say kind words to them, and give them lots of neck massages / cheek massages, they'll quickly melt and begin to purr. And if not - that is fine! Give them a kiss and put them down, and try



again and again and again throughout the day.

Pick them up and hold them while you brush your teeth, fill your water glass, or even while you go up and down stairs. Hold them up to the sink and let them check out running water, reassuring them it's nothing to fear. Pick them up even when they're busy, just to say hello and give them a kiss. The more you pick them up - even if they wiggle or act like they're not in the mood - the more they'll get used to it, come to accept it, and really come to love it. I constantly hold and "annoy" my kittens this way, this is a habit that helps them grow into affectionate adult cats who love being picked up. This is something to continue doing throughout their whole life!

#### **4. How to play with kitten (too much can make them less snuggly!) :**

Playing with you by using toys and chasing things like wands, springs, and catnip mice is essential to work out all that excess kitten energy and having fun like this is great for bonding, but avoid making it the 'only' focus of your time together. Too much hyper playtime without any touch, snuggling, or holding in between can actually lead to long term hyperactivity!

Mix active playtime with petting, holding, and praise to balance their energy and attention. For example: Let them chase and then 'catch' their toy a few times, and follow a successful catch with lots of praise, pet their back, and tell them how good they are. Then let the toy go again and let them chase! Again let them chase the toy for a few minutes, and let them catch it, let them have it for a moment, and then again go up and pet them, pick them up, praise and kiss them - then set them back down and let them play again. So for every hyper play activity happening, make sure to balance it with lots of touch, positive reinforcement, and even treats! They may not want to be held for long while they're in this 'play' mode, but you can still balance the hyper play time with lots of pets and praise. Cats love being told they are a good boy or a good girl and being pet along their back, head, and chest in between catching their toys just as much as dogs do! This teaches the kitten you are not just a big 'plaything', but are a member of their family and gets them very comfortable with being touched and pet by you!

#### **5. Allow Exploration After Bonding**

Once the first week or two has passed and you've carried your kitten around the house, showing them everything, you can gradually start letting them explore on their own. By this point, any adult cats or other pets in the home should be used to their presence too, making it a good time for introductions if they haven't met yet.

You'll know when your kitten is ready to roam based on your bond and trust level with them. I recommend waiting at least the full week / 7 days after bringing them home before letting them

explore without carrying them. Carrying them around as you introduce them to the house teaches them that being held equals a fun adventure!

## **6. When to begin letting them out unsupervised (keeping them safe!):**

You'll get a sense of when you can trust your kitten to be left alone, but generally, kittens are very unpredictable for the first 6 - 8 months. During this period, it's essential to keep their kitten room as a designated, safe space for them. This way, you can confidently leave them unsupervised without worrying about potential harm or damage.

Even once your kitten is comfortable being out and about, **I strongly recommend keeping their space kitten-proofed for at least the first 6 months - 12 months.** Kittens can cause a lot of mayhem when unsupervised, and they may accidentally get into dangerous situations, such as chewing on cords or accessing toxic substances. Having a safe, secure area for them to be in, especially when you're out grocery shopping, at work, going to socials, or even at home but totally distracted by cleaning/working/playing/napping/etc is invaluable for their safety.

## **7. Use "time outs" to reinforce good behavior**

Place kitten back in their kitten-proofed room when they engage in bad behavior to teach them boundaries. For example: If they go on the counters or kitchen table? Say 'no!' firmly, and shoo them off. If they go up again, put them back in their room for the entire day - not just a few minutes. **You can do this with anything naughty, from climbing on curtains, getting into things they shouldn't, etc - any bad behavior should be corrected or told 'no' once, and after that it is back to their kitten room for the rest of the day / evening.** This process helps kitten learn that being part of the house requires good kitten manners, and prevents the stories you hear of nightmare cats that terrorize the house with bad behavior. View this time out process more as setting a boundary than as a discipline or punishment - never yell at your cat or hit them!

## **8. Expect 'Crying'—It's a Good Thing!**

As your kitten becomes more familiar with their room, they might start crying to be let out - and this is actually a great sign! It means your kitten is bonding to you and / or your family, and wants to be with you. I know it might feel a bit heart-wrenching to ignore their meows, but remember, you want to be the most exciting part of your kitten's life, especially during those first few weeks. As time goes on and they get used to their "new" room, they'll naturally start feeling bored after exploring every corner. Or, if you've put them back in their room for a time-out after some naughty behavior, they might cry to come out.

While it can be tough to hear, don't give in too quickly! Your kitten won't resent you for leaving them in their room for a while, as long as you're spending quality time with them still. The

crying is actually a positive sign—it means they love and miss you, and they'll be so excited to see you when you come back to spend time with them. This anticipation helps build a strong bond between you and your kitten, so embrace it as part of the bonding process!

### **9. Encourage Socialization!**

Invite guests over to meet your kitten after they've had at least two weeks to settle in and have explored the house with you and any immediate kids and family that live with you. Hosting a small gathering - like a party or a movie night or a potluck, is a great way to introduce kitten to people. Have everyone arrive while kitten is in their room, and then carry kitten out and gently introduce them to everyone one by one, holding them and praising them and letting them sniff all the new people. Once they seem comfortable (put them back in their room for a half hour if they seem overwhelmed, then try again), you can pass them around for cuddles and kisses, and / or let them down, and have people play with them using their favorite toys.

### **10. Use Food For Bonding and Rewards:**

- Especially the first week, SIT WITH YOUR KITTEN WHILE THEY EAT! Feed them from your lap, or have the food right next to you! You can even put wet food on your fingers and have them lick it off. It's a little gross, but it really helps them see you as family! In 'cat families', the older cats help show the kittens how to hunt - and share their prey with the kittens until they can begin catching their own reliably. So it's very bonding for you to 'bring prey' to your kitten and feed them. If you have kids, this is a great time to have them bond to the kids as their 'siblings' by sitting together for mealtime! Kittens do not like to eat alone, so make sure to set aside time at least once a day where you can sit with them and encourage them to eat.

And make a 'big deal' out of each mealtime! So when you go to refill their kibble, or are bringing them a fresh plate of wet food, have a particular phrase you want them to 'come to' when they hear you call out - so it can be their name, or something like 'Here Kitty Kitty Kitty!' - 'Treats! Treats!' - you can say whatever you'd like, but say the same things every time you get their meal so they know that phrase = food. As they grow, you can reinforce this with treats, too! They will learn to come RUNNING to you from wherever they are when you call out to them with that saying. :) Just always have a treat ready when they come running to reinforce the behavior!

Kittens are normally HIGHLY food motivated - and then their appetite cuts back and becomes more finicky as they age. So take advantage of their love of food, and especially make time to sit with them while they eat!