

BRINGING YOUR KITTEN HOME

A gentle guide for the first days and weeks together

Important: Veterinary Visit and Vaccination Timing

Per the BBMC purchase agreement, your kitten must be examined by a licensed veterinarian within 72 hours of going home. This visit documents the kitten's condition at transfer, verifies that you received a healthy cat, and establishes care with your veterinarian. Bring all BBMC veterinary and vaccination records to the appointment.

Every BBMC kitten goes home after receiving two age-appropriate vaccinations and routine deworming. Please do not give additional routine vaccines during the initial 72-hour examination unless your veterinarian determines that vaccination is medically necessary. BBMC asks families to wait at least two weeks after arrival before administering another routine vaccine so the kitten has time to recover from travel and adjust to the new home.

Rabies vaccination must follow the vaccine label and all state and local laws. Feline rabies vaccines available in the United States are either inactivated or recombinant canarypox-vectored vaccines. BBMC prefers that rabies vaccination be scheduled separately from other vaccines. Families should work with their veterinarian to choose the safest legally compliant date. In Maryland, cats six months of age or older must be adequately vaccinated against rabies.

Contact BBMC immediately if the veterinarian identifies a significant health concern during the initial examination.

Start Small and Move Slowly

Your kitten has just left the people, animals, smells, and routines they have known since birth. A calm, gradual introduction helps them feel safe, build trust, and adjust with confidence.

Every kitten adapts at a different pace. Some begin exploring immediately, while others need several days or even a few weeks before they feel completely comfortable. Follow your kitten's lead and avoid rushing the process.

Prepare a Safe Room

Before your kitten arrives, prepare a quiet room where they can settle in without having access to the entire house. A bedroom, office, or large bathroom can work well.

The room should include:

- Food and fresh water
- A litter box placed away from the food
- A comfortable bed or blanket
- A scratching surface
- A few safe toys
- A covered bed, box, or other hiding place

Kitten-proof before arrival

Check the room for cords, strings, hair ties, small objects, toxic plants, open windows, reclining furniture, and narrow spaces where a kitten could become trapped.

When you first arrive home, place the carrier in the safe room and open the door. Allow your kitten to come out when they are ready. Do not pull them out or force them to explore.

The First 24 Hours

Keep the first day quiet and predictable. Sit calmly in the room, speak softly, and allow your kitten to approach you.

Avoid introducing every family member at once. Too much attention can be stressful, even for a friendly and social kitten. Limit visits and keep interactions short.

Your kitten may hide, sleep frequently, cry, eat less than usual, or hesitate to use the litter box immediately. Travel and a new environment can temporarily affect normal routines.

Show your kitten where the food, water, and litter box are located, but do not repeatedly move or place them in the litter box unless necessary.

Introducing Family Members

Introduce family members one or two at a time. Ask everyone to sit quietly rather than approaching, reaching for, or surrounding the kitten.

Allow your kitten to sniff and investigate each person. Gentle play with a wand toy can help build trust without requiring immediate physical contact.

Family members should avoid:

- Chasing or cornering the kitten
- Picking them up repeatedly
- Passing them from person to person
- Waking them to play
- Forcing cuddles
- Using loud voices or making sudden movements

Even affectionate kittens need time to rest and observe their new surroundings.

Introducing Children

Children should sit on the floor and allow the kitten to approach them. Show children how to pet gently along the kitten's back and sides.

Do not allow children to grab the kitten, pull their legs or tail, carry them without permission, or disturb them while they are eating, sleeping, or using the litter box.

Keep early interactions brief and supervised. A kitten should always have a clear way to move away when they need a break.

For children who benefit from predictability

Quiet voices, short visits, clear handling rules, and a consistent routine can help both the child and kitten feel more comfortable.

Expanding Into the House

Do not give your kitten immediate access to the entire home. A large unfamiliar space can feel overwhelming and may make it harder for them to locate their litter box.

Once your kitten is eating, drinking, playing, and consistently using the litter box, allow them to explore one additional area at a time.

Supervise early exploration and close doors to rooms that have not been kitten-proofed. Keep the safe room available so your kitten can return to a familiar space.

Some kittens are ready to explore after a day or two. Others may need a week or longer. Progress should be based on confidence, not a fixed schedule.

Introducing Other Cats

Do not place your new kitten directly in front of a resident cat. Even friendly cats may feel territorial or uncertain.

Begin with complete separation. Allow the cats to smell each other through the closed door. You can also exchange bedding or gently rub each cat with a separate soft cloth and place the cloth near the other cat's resting area.

Feed both cats on opposite sides of the closed door. Start several feet away and gradually move the dishes closer as long as both cats remain relaxed.

When they appear comfortable with each other's scent, allow them to see one another through a baby gate, screen, or slightly opened door. Keep these sessions brief.

Move to supervised face-to-face meetings only when both animals appear calm. Hissing or growling does not always mean the introduction has failed; these behaviors can be a normal way for cats to communicate discomfort and ask for space.

Do not punish a reaction

If either cat becomes distressed, separate them calmly and return to an earlier step. Slower introductions often create better long-term relationships.

Introducing Dogs

Keep dogs leashed during the first meetings. Your kitten should have access to a high surface, hiding place, or escape route that the dog cannot reach.

Reward the dog for calm behavior and redirect staring, barking, lunging, or attempts to chase. Never force the kitten to approach the dog.

Keep meetings short and end them while both animals are calm. Do not leave the kitten alone with a dog until you are confident that the dog remains gentle and controlled.

Even a friendly dog can accidentally injure a small kitten during overly excited play.

Keep Food and Litter Consistent

Continue feeding the same food and using the same type of litter your kitten used before coming home. Sudden changes can cause digestive upset or litter-box avoidance.

Do not change your kitten's diet during the first month at home unless your veterinarian directs you to do so. After the first month, make any food change gradually over seven to ten days by mixing a small amount of the new food into the familiar food and slowly increasing the amount.

Avoid relocating the litter box during the adjustment period. If your home has multiple levels, provide at least one easily accessible litter box on each level your kitten uses.

Create a Predictable Routine

Kittens feel more secure when their days are predictable. Feed meals at consistent times and provide regular periods for play, grooming, affection, and rest.

Young kittens may play intensely and then fall asleep quickly. Make sure your kitten has a warm, quiet place to rest without being disturbed.

Minskins are social cats and often enjoy being close to their families, but they still need opportunities to choose when and how they interact.

What May Be Normal During Adjustment

- Hiding or acting cautious
- Crying, especially at night
- Eating slightly less than usual
- Sleeping more than expected
- Mildly soft stool after travel
- Following one family member closely
- Avoiding other pets
- Becoming more active when the house is quiet

These behaviors should gradually improve as your kitten becomes comfortable.

When to Contact a Veterinarian

Young kittens can become ill quickly

When something does not seem right, it is better to contact your veterinarian than to wait.

Contact a veterinarian promptly if your kitten:

- Refuses food or water
- Has repeated vomiting
- Has persistent or severe diarrhea
- Appears extremely weak or difficult to wake
- Has trouble breathing
- Strains to urinate or cannot urinate
- Has pale, gray, or blue gums
- Shows signs of injury or significant pain
- Develops discharge from the eyes or nose
- Seems dehydrated or becomes noticeably worse

A Simple Adjustment Timeline

First day	Keep your kitten in their safe room. Offer food, water, litter, gentle play, and quiet companionship.
Days 2-3	Continue short visits with family members. Allow supervised exploration of one small additional area if the kitten appears confident.
First week	Gradually expand access to the home. Continue scent-based introductions with other pets and begin brief visual meetings when everyone appears calm.
Following weeks	Increase freedom, family interaction, and supervised time with other animals based on the kitten's comfort level.

Be Patient

Your kitten does not need to meet everyone, explore the entire house, or become best friends with another pet on the first day.

A slow introduction may feel inconvenient at first, but it creates a stronger foundation for confidence, trust, and long-term success. Give your kitten time, provide plenty of reassurance, and allow their personality to emerge at their own pace.

The goal is not speed - it is security

Let your kitten set the pace. Small, positive experiences will help your new family member feel safe and build a lasting bond with your household.