

# Introducing Your New Kitty To A Young Child

So you want to bring a kitty into your home with you and your small children. This can be a wonderful way to enrich your child's life, and teach them compassion. Making the right introduction is important, and will make everyone happier in the end.

## **Before You adopt**

Teach your child what cats like, and what they don't like.

- It can be very helpful to buy them a stuffed animal cat, so you can teach them visually.
- Demonstrate that the cat doesn't like to be poked, or have its tail pulled.
- Demonstrate, and have them practice, petting only from the back of the head to the mid back. Petting other parts of the cat can be enjoyable for the cat, but can trigger playful biting and scratching.
- Hands up! when kitty tries to bite or scratch, even when playful. Teach your child they are trying to play, but need to learn to play differently.



- In particular, make sure your child knows not to scratch kitty's belly, no matter how inviting it may be. If kitty doesn't like it, they will tend to wrap around your child's hand with their claws out.
- Set some rules for the playing with the kitty
- No chasing - kitty doesn't like it
- Play time is for toys, not fingers
- Your child shouldn't pick up kitty until you think they are ready, and the kitty is OK with it.
- No hugging! Young children frequently can't tell when they are squeezing too hard, and can hurt the cat, or be hurt by it if it becomes upset.

## **Bringing kitty home**

How to introduce your child to the kitty safely and happily.

- Have a special room just for the kitty, and keep it in there for at least 4 days, even if you have no other pets. This is a good policy even if you don't have children, because it helps the kitty become comfortable with you and your home more quickly.
- After a couple of days, take your child in to meet the kitty, and let them know that they should wait for the kitty to come to them.
- Remind your child of the rules with kitty, and how to pet.
- If the cat comes to you and your child, have your child pet kitty a little.
- Explain some of kitties behavior, such as rubbing against a person means kitty likes them.
- Do not allow your child to have unsupervised time with your kitty until you know they have build good habits for interacting with kitty. Upsetting the cat can result in a swat and a scratch.

## **Other things to consider**

- Young Children + kittens = scratched children. One of the things that kittens learn is how to be gentle with their claws and teeth. Most cats less than 9 months to a year old will not be appropriate for children under 5.
- Some cats love young children, others don't. Talk with your Case Manager about who would be a good fit for your children, and bring them to meet kitty before adopting.
- Create a "safe space" for your kitty, where your child knows to leave them be.
- Always supervise visits with other children, and put the cat in another room, if need be.
- Many cats like to play 'king of the castle' when up on scratching posts or kitty condos. Make sure your child knows this isn't a place to pet kitty unless you know kitty isn't the king of that castle.