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Kitten Socialization Checklist

The goal is that the kitten has positive experiences, not neutral or bad ones. It's important to watch the kitten's response and note what is and to also give treats to ensure the exposure is a success.

Here is a checklist that can help you.

As an option, you can grade your new kitten's response using the grading system in the first table below. Otherwise, you may proceed to the checklists on the following pages:

Optional Grading System for Checklists

	Score	Response
Needs Work	5	Reactive/Aggressive: Growl, hiss, scratch, bite, yowl
	4	Avoid: Struggle, hide, try to get away, won't approach, or hesitant to approach
	3	Freeze: Holds still (but not eating), non-exploratory, moving slowly or acting sleepy when they shouldn't be tired, crouch close to floor
Going Well	2	Calm, relaxed, explores the object or environment, playful, focused on the food or toy
	1	Calm, relaxed, explores the object or environment, playful, even without food or toy

If your kitten would score 3 or higher with a stimulus, then try again, but reduce the stimulus while distracting with a positive treat or play items. Common ways to reduce a stimulus are to increase the distance between the kitten and the stimulus or decrease the intensity (example, decreasing volume) or decreasing stimulus duration. Once your kitten seems to be accepting of the stimulus (better score) with the decreased stimulus, then try increasing the stimulus by a small amount. This slow process of desensitization, using positive rewards while gradually increasing a stimulus, is the best way to overcome fear and anxiety.


Checklist for Kitten Socialization


Week Start Date: _____


		Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Handling 	Checking the ears							
	Examining mouth and gums							
	Opening the eyelids							
	Squeezing the feet							
	Handling and trimming the toenails							
	Lightly pinching skin							
	Touching and squeezing the nose							
	Cradling kitten in your arms on its back							
	Holding kitten in your lap							
	Holding kitten upside down for a second							
	Holding kitten on it's back while giving a belly rub							
	Hugging your kitten							
	Gently pulling on the neck collar							
	Grabbing the kitten by other part of his/her body							
	Wiping body with a towel							
	Putting on a body harness							

Checklist for Kitten Socialization

Week Start Date: _____


Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
		Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Unfamiliar People 	Women							
	Men							
	People whose skin color is different than your own							
	Toddlers (walking and squealing)							
	Infants (crawling)							


Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
		Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Unfamiliar Cats 	Friendly adult cats							
	Friendly kittens who play well							

Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
		Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Other Species 	Dogs friendly to cats							
	Any other species of pets you may have access to							


Checklist for Kitten Socialization

Week Start Date: _____

		Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Veterinary Visit Preparation 	Crate training - CATalystCouncil.org video https://youtu.be/9RGY5oSKVfo							
	Car rides							
	Vet Clinic "Happy Visit" or Kitten Class							
	Metal surfaces – such as vet hospital scales, exam tables							

		Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Scary Sounds* 	Babies crying							
	Blender							
	Dogs barking							
	Doorbell ringing							
	Vacuum cleaner							

*If you do not have access to some of these sounds while your cat is a kitten, then consider using online audio files and feeding your kitten in the area of the computer speakers. Again, the goal is make this a pleasant experience for your kitten.

		Day & Check Mark (or optional Score)						
Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
**New Environments 	Grass/lawns							
	Suburban neighborhood							
	Viewing moving traffic							

**Consider training your kitten to a body harness so he/she can go outdoors. Then, while harnessed and leashed and under controlled supervision, and again, food treats are acceptable, expose your kitten to new outdoor environments. Consider this even if you plan on making your kitten an indoor cat. Research has shown that early exposure and desensitization, reduces fear and anxiety and behavior problems in older cats.

Even “Socialize” to Different Forms of Food so they learn at an early age that canned or dry (kibbled) forms of food are actually food. They should be exposed to both types.

Class of Socialization	Specific Socialization	
Types of Food	Dry (kibbled) kitten* food	
	Canned kitten* food	

*a food that has on it's label, 'all ages' or 'all life stages' is okay to feed kittens