

WHAT YOUR NEW CAT OR KITTEN WANTS YOU TO KNOW

1. Do not declaw me

Human nails grow from skin, but my claws grow from bones. Declawing is equivalent to amputating the first knuckle from each finger and is severely painful for me. It can also cause me lasting physical and emotional trauma. Top veterinary behaviorists, cat behavior experts, and the American Veterinary Medical Association all agree that declawing is not a necessary surgery.

2. Provide me with scratching posts

Scratching is a deeply ingrained instinct that allows me to get a nice stretch, release pheromones off of my paw pads, and leave a visual marker. I love tall, sturdy scratching posts with rough materials such as sisal rope or natural soft wood. Put my scratching post in an area that I spend time in.

3. I need meat

As a cat, I am considered an obligate carnivore, that means I must receive protein from meat sources. Choose a food where meat is the first ingredient and there are no byproducts or fillers such as brewers rice. I do best when I eat several small meals throughout the day.

4. I am a true predator

I need an outlet for my predatory instincts to hunt, catch, and kill live prey. This does not mean I have to go outside and catch mice though. All you have to do is provide me with 10 minutes of interactive playtime each day.

5. Provide me with hiding spots and vertical spaces

I naturally feel safe and secure when I have places to hide. Vertical spaces such as a cat tree or shelf give me a place where I can escape what's on the ground.

6. I rely on you to keep me healthy

Since I'm a cat, I cannot schedule a vet appointment for myself. I need you to take me to the vet at least once a year. I am naturally able to hide pain and illness, so any behavioral changes with me could indicate a medical condition. Teach me that the carrier is a fun place and you'll have no trouble getting me to the vet.

7. Scoop my litter box 1–2 times per day

I'm naturally a clean animal and having a dirty box stresses me out. Make sure my litter box is big enough and located in an area where I won't feel trapped.

8. Train me

I am smart and love to learn new things. Please reward me for the behaviors you want me to do instead of punishing me for unwanted behavior. Using punishment only teaches me to be afraid of you and causes frustration for me.

8. I do not misbehave out of spite

That's what humans do, not what cats do! If I eliminate outside of the litter box, this may mean I have a bladder infection or feel unsafe using my litter box. If I bite your ankles, this may mean I need more outlets to exercise my predatory instincts. I never do something as a way to get back at you.

