- ***Tail Signals***—Cat tails are very expressive, but in a way that is often subtle. A tail that is flicking back and forth quickly or held low can indicate an irritated cat. The hair may also stand up on an angry cat's tail.
- ***Eye Signals***—Dilated or constricted pupils can both indicate anger. Eye signals can be exceptionally hard to read because your cat's eyes can be affected by so many factors. For instance, the amount your cat's pupils are dilated can help determine if your cat is angry, but here eyes can also dilate to adjust to the amount of light in the room. Take a note of her eyes but use the information in conjunction with other clues, such as ear signals and vocalizations.

- ***Ear Signals***— An angry cat's ears will lay flat, either towards the side or back of her head.
- ***Body Language*** - You can gather a good amount of information by observing your cat's stance. An angry cat will often display an arched back with fur standing on end (an attempt to look as big as possible), or a body that's hunched close to the ground, ready to strike.

- ***Swatting***—If your cat swats at you when you try to pet them, respect it as a clear signal that they don't want to be touched.

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Kittens are adorable so its understandable why it can be tempting to take one home without thinking of the commitment, time and effort it will take to care for them. Remember, kittens can be demanding and taking one on means you are committing to their lifelong care—perhaps 20 years or more!

There is no reason why you shouldn't have a cat or kitten when you have children but there are some steps you should take and information you should know to make any introduction go smoothly.

Bringing the kitten home

Moving to a new home is stressful for a kitten. Give reassurance and time to adjust to new surroundings before making introductions to other animals or people in the household. Ensure all doors and windows are closed and there is a guard in front of the fireplace. Ensure the kitten knows where their bed, litter tray and food bowls are.

Place the carrier on the floor and then open the door. Let them come out in their own time. They'll probably have a good sniff around before finding their bed. When they have investigated every nook and cranny, give them a little cuddle and see if they need to rest.

Kittens LOVE to sleep and they need plenty of it. After all the excitement of the car journey and exploring their new home, they'll need a nap. Try to resist the urge to start playing with them straight away and give them lots of opportunities to explore and rest undisturbed.

If it's feeding time, do offer them some food but don't be surprised if they don't eat. Cats often go off their food for a while if they're a bit stressed, so give them time to settle in and their appetite will soon return.

The kitten's bed should be a "safe zone" for them to go to when things get too much. Make sure no one is allowed to touch the kitten when they are there and they will feel safe knowing they can rest without being disturbed.

The bed needs to be warm, dry, comfortable and draught free. Buy a bed from a pet shop or use a strong, dry cardboard box with a hole cut in the side. It should contain soft bedding and be placed in a warm, safe place.

You can also use a warm (NOT HOT) water bottle under a blanket which can help to compensate for the absence of the kitten's mother or litter-mates. If you have or can borrow a large secure pen, this can provide a safe den and can hold the kitten's litter tray and bed. It is also an excellent way to introduce children and other animals.

Handling your new kitten

Taking on a new kitten when you have a new baby or a toddler might be a lot to handle at once, so ensuring you have time for all the parties is part of a successful introduction.

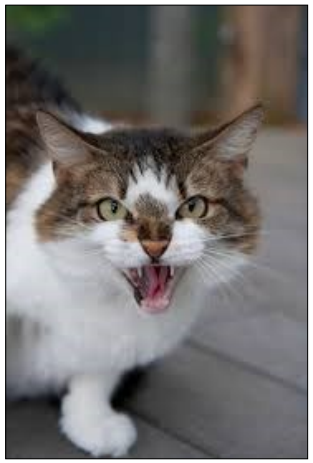
It is very important that children are taught from the very beginning how to approach, stoke and handle cats and to understand how to treat them kindly. Many children develop and go on to have a great relationship with their cat, teaching respect for other creatures and being gentle, so it is important that parents lay down the rules. Children must be taught that the newcomer is not a toy, and they should not pick up the kitten but sit on the floor and wait

Playing stops when the kitten chooses and the pet should be allowed to go back to bed undisturbed. Children should be aware that a kitten may scratch and play-bite.

- Teach your child how to stroke the kitten gently. Toddlers generally "pat" which can hurt. Instead, a light stroke is ideal. Tails should never be pulled.
- Teach them where to stroke a kitten—the top of the head and along the back.
- Although tummies are irresistible when a kitten is rolling and playing but most are rather sensitive about this area and may lash out.
- Your kitten should always be left alone when feeding, toileting or sleeping.
- Hands should be washed after handling the kitten and the litter tray.
- The litter tray is not a sandpit so don't let your child play in it.

How can I tell what my kitten is saying?

Cats are finicky creatures and their mood can change quickly from happy to upset. The ability to see when your cat is angry will allow you to understand when to back off and give your cat space instead of escalating the situation. Continuing to prod a cat who is angry is not only disrespectful, it's also dangerous. A cat who is exhibiting any of these 6 signs, is prepared to strike!



- ***Vocalizations***— Give your cat space if they are hissing, spitting or emitting a guttural moan. These sounds are the closest your cat can get to saying "Hey, back off!"