



Lightfoot Ragdolls

The Importance of Kitten Early Socialization

Ragdolls have a general personality as a breed of calm, quiet, playful, social, floppy, etc. But as with every living thing, they are born with differing personalities. And, as with every living thing, socialization and “training” are important.

There is a magic window with cats, approximately between 3-9 weeks, that is ideal to socialize kittens. Our kittens are held daily from the time they are born, so they are used to the smell of me, and my kids and grandkids when they are big enough to be held by them. That’s an important start, but not the only important thing.

They need to play with people, get used to sounds, sudden movements, screaming kids, vacuums, etc. They need to get used to their paws being touched and nail trims so that’s not a traumatic experience when they are older. As mentioned above, they have their own personalities and respond to these things individually. Exposure is vital. Some kittens are still startled easily, never like vacuums, etc. We do our best! We had 9 kittens in the office last fall. Every day I used a hand vac to clean up litter and food messes. Until the day they left, there were some that ran from it, some that could care less, and some that would attack the vacuum. I have a 3-year-old grandson that likes to screech when he’s excited. It took a little while for the kittens to get used to that. Again, some did better than others. Little kids also move fast. Before the kittens leave here, they will have been exposed to different ages of children.

Regardless of how much foot touching and nail trims are done, some cats just never like it and will continue to fight, but the more it’s done when they are little, before they go home, the better it is. Same with brushing--some love it, some tolerate it—most will not “hate” it if they are exposed to it when they are little. We start with a cute little comb and work up to different brushes as they grow.

It’s important to continue the socialization work when you take your kitten home. We don’t have a dog, so our cats are not exposed to dogs, but the kittens that have gone home to families with dogs have generally done great.

Brush your kitty daily, if possible, but at least weekly. The more often you do it when you get home, the better they will do. Trim their nails weekly. We have a video on our articles page that will show you how, if you haven't done that before. Don't hesitate to vacuum around your cat, or sweep the floor. They will run if it bothers them, just don't vacuum up the tail, haha, please, for those cats that don't think they need to move out of your way for any reason. Those of you who need to step over your ragdoll on a regular basis know what I mean.

Something we most likely will not have done when your kitten goes home is brush their teeth. That is something that can be important to do, as well. Please only use cat approved toothpaste. Human toothpaste is toxic to cats. Here is a video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dBySVcgIYI>

There are other things you can do, also, for dental care. There are liquid supplements you can add to the water. Another great thing to add to your cat's diet is the plaque control from Paw Tree. <https://pawtree.com/Lightfootragdolls/product/Plaque-Control-GM2475?itemCode=2475S&itemCode=Plaque-Control-GM2475>

Work with your vet to determine the best way to keep your cat's mouth healthy.

We don't recommend letting your cat just go outside. SO many bad things can happen. If you do, please have your cat in a harness and leash. You can use a cat backpack to carry them around outside, or a pet stroller. Please connect the harness to the restraining leash inside the stroller so your cat doesn't bolt. When out for a walk or at a park, be cautious about over-stimulating your cat. My daughter takes her cat to the park in a stroller. Some days went great, others were stressful. A lot of kids will probably want to pet your cat. Depending on your cat's personality, he or she may love that or hate it or be terrified, especially if it's a group of kids. Please pay close attention to how your pet is reacting to the situation and control it accordingly.

Some people think their cat needs play dates to have friends. That is not necessary. If you do have a friend that has a cat, and you want to bring them together to play, please approach it very slowly. If you have ever brought a new cat or kitten home to an established cat in the home, you know there's often hissing and growling for days or sometimes weeks and that introduction needs to be done slowly. Keep in mind that your experience with a play date may go the same way. Some cats are better at getting to know new friends than others. If you happen to have 2 of those, it could be pretty fun. Otherwise, you may want to forego that idea and just let your cat live stress-free in your home without worrying about introducing another cat.

Just an interesting side note, even a kitten a couple days old will hiss when they are startled.

Be consistent and safely expose your kitten to a variety of situations they can adapt to so they will become well-adjusted adults.

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