



Lightfoot Ragdolls

and Cherubims

RAGDOLLS AND CHILDREN

As with any animal, it's not good to just leave them alone with children initially. Young children can be pretty fast. Kittens and cats can be pretty fast! In over the decade we have had ragdolls in our home, we have had our younger kids and grandchildren around. Very rarely have I worried for the anyone's safety, like getting attacked, but kittens aren't very careful and don't exactly know what to do with their claws or teeth at first. Once they are adults, I haven't had any problem with a one year old grabbing the cat. Most ragdolls are pretty patient and kind of wait for their chance to escape if they are not feeling it. Make sure the cat is safe, though! No eyes and ears. You don't want to have to deal with an injury to your kitten. If feet get grabbed, a child may get scratched or bit. By the time the kittens go home, we have worked a bit with playing, but they can forget you aren't another kitten, initially, and will play with their teeth.

Like with dogs, cats can learn "rules," but most "training" is done with the humans. A well-behaved dog has a trained owner that has learned what to do with the dog and teaches the dog a few things. Cats, though much more independent and not usually as naughty as dogs, still need to learn the rules and the people around them do, too. If you play aggressively with your cat and let them play-bite you, they will think that's normal. That is not okay around children. We spend a lot of time with young children teaching them the proper way to pick up a kitten/cat—to have a hand under the upper arms and hold their butt. We usually start with them sitting down and we help place the kitten in their arms. Sometimes the kitten doesn't want to stay very long. We teach the kids to let them go, if they are trying to go. Start SLOWLY and cautiously. The kids are usually pretty excited and forget what they can and can't do. If the kitten is new to your home, then it's getting used to a whole bunch of new things.

Eventually, the kitten comes to them and wants attention. We teach the kids to follow the kitten's lead and to pay attention to the cat's body language. When kittens and cats are forced to stay or be where they don't want to be or feel safe, then kids can get hurt.

Another thing we teach the kids when playing with a wand toy, is to keep it away from their body. Often the kitten is jumping for it and may land on the child, who sometimes gets

scared or scratched. When the kitten is new, we also talk to the kids about being more quiet. Hopefully the kitten is used to noises, but in a new place, it can be a bit scary.

It doesn't usually take too long for kids 3 and older to get the hang of a new kitten and for the kitten to get comfortable with the child. I usually keep a pretty close eye on kids younger than 3 the whole time they are awake around the animal.

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