



SAFE AT HOME – KITTEN FOSTER MANUAL

Table of Contents

SECTION A: Welcome to the SAH Team.....	2
Safe at Home FB Page.....	2
Become a Volunteer.....	2
Stray Cat Alliance Social Media.....	2
SECTION B: Preparing for Your Foster Kittens.....	3
Kitten Proofing Your Home.....	3
Supplies.....	4
Kitten Development Timeline.....	8
SECTION C: Caring For Your Kittens.....	9
Basic Care for Bottle Babies	9-12
Fading Kitten Protocol.....	13
Basic Care for Gruel Babies	14-18
Basic Care for Weaned Kittens.....	19
Grooming & Bathing.....	19
How to Give a Kitten a Flea Bath.....	20-21
Treatments Required.....	22
SECTION D: Socializing Your Kittens.....	23
Exploring the World.....	23
Working With Shy/Fearful Kittens.....	24
Advice for Bitey Kittens.....	25
SECTION E: Frequently Asked Questions.....	27-28

Section A: Welcome to the Safe at Home Team!

Thank you for opening your heart and home to foster kitties! Stray Cat Alliance can't save these kittens without your help. Each February marks the start of kitten season and the season will last all the way through October!

In 2020, Stray Cat Alliance took in **751 kittens** through our Safe At Home Program! And this year, with your support, Stray Cat Alliance has a plan to SAVE even MORE!

Please join our facebook group, ***Safe At Home - Fosters and Kittens.***

- Fosters can share photos, videos, ideas and updates on their kittens.
- Form new connections with other fosters
- Program Updates
- Meet our new kittens and recent graduates
- Tune in for live videos of SAH Kitten intakes
- Stay updated on Kitten Care Training events and videos
- & Much more!

Want to become more involved? Become a volunteer! The kitties need your help! We are open 7 days a week and have opportunities every single day for you to be a part of our life saving work.

- Cat Care and socialization at Jefferson Park
- Shelter Interventions
- Outreach & Canvassing
- Transporting cats and kittens
- Helping at our thrift store
- Trapping for TNR
- Adoption team assistance
- & many more ways for you to be involved!

Submit a volunteer application online through our website at **straycatalliance.org** and join our Volunteer FB Group ***Stray Cat Alliance Volunteers*** once you officially become a volunteer!



SECTION B: Preparing for your foster kittens

Preparing for your foster kittens

- Kittens should be separated from all other animals in your household for at least two weeks and kept in a small area.
 - Spare room or bathroom works perfectly. Kitten playpens are great options too.
 - Kittens must be kept **indoor only**
 - Area should be warm and draft-free as kittens cannot regulate their own body temperature
 - If kittens are under 3 weeks of age you will need to provide a heat source (Snugglesafe disks, heating pad, etc.)
 - Kittens over 3 weeks should have access to food, water, and litter box
- They will need a secure sleeping area such as a carrier with the door removed or a box laid on its side. Make sure to provide a blanket for them to lay on.
 - Kittens who are under 3 weeks of age need to be kept in a closed carrier with a heat source at all times, only to be taken out during feeding time.

Kitten-proofing your home

Foster kittens are tiny and cute, but just like children, they are also very curious. Once they become mobile they will try to get into everything to explore. Here are some tips to kitten-proof your home:

- Put away any small items that a kitten can swallow.
- Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets and remove toxic plants.
- If kittens are staying in a bathroom, make sure the toilet lid is closed at all times.
- Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide in.
- When setting up your kitten room, be sure to place the litter boxes as far away from food and water as possible.
- Make sure all windows are closed, or inaccessible to the kittens when they are open. Also, make sure everyone in the home is careful when opening or closing entrances leading to the outdoors.
- Many plants are toxic to cats so make sure to check if your plants and flowers are cat and kitten safe.



Supplies

The Safe at Home program will provide you with all necessary supplies to foster. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items to your foster kittens. Once all of your foster kittens are adopted, the following **borrowed supplies must be returned** to the Stray Cat Alliance office:

- Wire dog crate and/or plastic carrier
- Heating pads or Snuggle Safes
- Electronic weight scale

If you need to restock on supplies please contact your counselor to arrange a pick up from the Stray Cat Alliance. If there is no answer make sure to leave a voicemail and send a text message.

KITTEN DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

It is always reassuring to know what to expect in regards to your kitten's development. Not all kittens will develop at the same rate, but this timeline should give you a general idea of whether or not they are reaching their milestones on time and progressing well.

Week 1



- Kittens are born blind and deaf with eyes closed and ears folded down.
- Newborns are unable to regulate their body temperature, and without mom they will need an outside heat source like a heating pad or snuggle safe disc.
- The umbilical cord remains attached for the first three days.
- Kittens are unable to potty on their own and will need to be stimulated to activate elimination.
- They will need to be bottle fed kitten formula every 2 hours around the clock.

Week 2



- Their eyes are beginning to open but their vision is not very good.
- At this stage all kittens have blue eyes.
- Young kittens are vulnerable to eye infections so watch for any signs of infection such as crustiness or white/yellow secretions.
- They will need to be bottle fed formula (KMR) every 3-4 hours around the clock.
- By the end of the second week kittens should double in weight.

Week 3



- Kittens will become more aware of their littermates at this stage and their sense of smell will continue to develop.
- Around the three week mark kittens begin to shakily move about and will try to walk and explore.
- Their ears will begin to unfold.
- Baby teeth will begin to show.
- They are now able to purr.
- They will need to be bottle fed kitten formula every 4-6 hours around the clock.

Week 4



- Kittens are becoming more and more active and will begin to play with one another.
- At this point you should begin the weaning process and offer them gruel (wet kitten food with kitten formula) and provide a small bowl of water to drink from.
- Start introducing the litter box and encourage them to potty on their own.
- Their sense of hearing is now well developed.

Week 5



- Their sight is fully developed at five weeks although their eyes will remain bluish.
- At the end of five weeks, kittens ideally will be eating wet and dry food on their own.
- They should be using the litter box although you will likely find some accidents.
- Kittens are much more graceful on their feet and often start stalking and pouncing on their littermates.

Weeks 6-8



- Their eye color will begin to change.
- The kittens are extremely active at this stage.
- It's important you make time to socialize and play with your kittens.
- Dry food and water should be available at all times and wet food should be offered three times daily during the morning, afternoon, and evening.
- Once kittens are two pounds, they are ready to be spayed/neutered and become available for adoption.

SECTION C: Caring For Your Kittens

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Basic Care for Bottle Babies (0-4 weeks old)

It is normal for a bottle kitten to be “fussy” every now and then, and if it refuses to drink you may wait and try again at the next scheduled feeding. If a bottle kitten skips several meals, or has not eaten in 8 hours, please call, leave a voicemail and text your counselor. If the kitten(s) seem lethargic, follow the **fading kitten protocol**.

STEP 1: Mix the formula

- You can pre-mix enough Kitten Milk Replacement (KMR formula) to last for 24 hours of feeding; but it must be refrigerated at all times. Discard all mixed formula after 24 hours. Avoid reheating formula excessively because harmful bacteria can develop in it.
 - KMR powdered formula: Use 1 part formula to 2 parts water. A part is whatever you are using to measure with. For example, if you’re using a tablespoon for measuring, this would mean 1 tablespoon of powdered KMR and 2 tablespoons of water.
 - For the first couple feedings, dilute the formula (3 parts water to 1 part formula) to help reduce digestive upset.
- The opened can of powdered formula should also be refrigerated.

STEP 2: Prepare the bottle

- Estimate the required amount of formula in a clean bottle
- Place the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes.
- Before feeding the kittens, always test the temperature of the formula by placing a few drops on your inner wrist to be sure the formula is not too hot. The formula should be slightly warmer than your body temperature.
- Test the nipple. Formula should slowly drip from tip when bottle is upside down, and should not be streaming.

STEP 3: Prepare the kitten

- Ensure that the kitten is warm before offering food. *** Do not attempt to feed a kitten who feels cold to the touch; it can create serious health consequences ***

- A kitten's ideal body temperature is 100-102 degrees fahrenheit. To warm up a kitten, place him on a heating pad wrapped in 2-3 layers of towels. Turn the kittens from side to side every 5 minutes and massage them gently with hand-rubbing.
- **NEVER** feed a kitten on his back. The kitten should be on his stomach in a position similar to how he would lay next to his mother to nurse. You may try holding the kitten upright swaddled in a warm towel or have the kitten lay on a towel in your lap. Being wrapped up makes kittens feel safer as they eat. Experiment with what position works best for you and the kitten.
 - If the kitten allows it, the front legs should be free to allow him to “knead” with his paws. This kneading activity is essential to the kitten's muscle development & helps aid in digestion.



- Turn the bottle upside down and allow a drop of formula to come out. Place the bottle nipple in the kitten's mouth and gently move it back and forth, holding the bottle at a 45-degree angle to keep air from getting into the kitten's stomach. This movement should encourage the kitten to start eating. ***Don't squeeze the bottle, a kitten should suckle the formula out of the bottle on his own. If at first you don't succeed, wait a few minutes and try again. Be patient; it may take a few tries. Usually the kitten will latch on and begin to suckle. If the bottle appears to be collapsing, gently remove the nipple from the kitten's mouth and let more air return to the bottle.
 - Allow the kitten to suckle at his own pace. If a kitten refuses to suckle, try stroking the kitten's back or gently rubbing her on her forehead. This stroking is similar to momma cat's cleaning and it may stimulate the kitten to nurse. If this doesn't work, try rubbing some Karo Syrup on the kitten's lips.
 - **AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT ASPIRATION:** if liquid bubbles out through the kitten's nose or he starts coughing, he may have gotten formula in his lungs. Pat the kitten very gently on the back to elicit a cough or sneeze, or hold him in an inverted position, (tail over head), for a moment to remove the formula from his lungs.
- If you are feeding multiple kittens, feed the first kitten until he stops nursing, then begin feeding the next kitten, and so on.
- To determine if a kitten has eaten enough, use your best judgement. A well-fed kitten's belly should be round, but not hard and distended. Smaller or weaker kittens may eat less per feeding and will need to be fed more often. You can also use the “*Minimum Feeding Requirements for Kittens Based on Weight*” chart and the chart above “Kitten Weight & Feeding Chart”
- You can feed a 2nd round if you feel any of your kittens need to eat a little more. When a kitten stops nursing, he/she has had enough.

- Remember – feeding smaller amounts more frequently is better for kittens, as it will help to keep them hydrated and prevent issues associated with overfeeding.
- Be sure not to overfeed, as this could cause diarrhea.
- Kittens need to be burped, just like human babies. Lay the kitten on his stomach, on your shoulder or in your lap, and very gently pat his back until you hear a little burp. You may need to burp a couple times per feeding.



STEP 4: Stimulate the kitten



Kittens under 4 weeks need stimulation in order to pee and poop. Mom cats would lick the babies until they go to the bathroom, but since the kittens we save are orphaned, they need your help!

We use baby wipes or tissues to gently wipe the kitten on their abdomen/genital area before and after every meal. It should take less than a minute for them to eliminate. Of course, if they are still actively eliminating, keep going until they are done. Never stop to check and see if the kitten is done pooping because they will stop pushing. You need to keep stimulating them until they are done. Newborn kittens should pee after every feeding and poop at least once a day. If the kitten is ready to poop, there will be some movement in their abdomen. Bottle baby kittens' poop tends to be yellow so don't be alarmed. Completely solid stool will not form while kittens are on formula.

Remember to wipe the kitten's tail and legs after they pee to keep them clean and prevent urine scald.

Holding Positions

You can hold the kitten either face up or face down while you stimulate. See what is most comfortable for both you and the kitten. Continue using that method every time you stimulate the kitten.

Stimulation Methods

You can stimulate the kitten in a circular pattern or you can do the triangle pattern where you hold a finger on either side of the tail and rub.



Constipation

Three days of no pooping can mean the kitten is constipated. In that case, we would start supportive care. You can dilute the formula by using a ratio of 3:1 water to KMR. You can also massage their belly to help get things moving along. We can also try using a probiotic called Benebac to their formula. If those methods don't help the kitten to poop, they would need to be seen on site and we can give fluids and enemas to help them go.

You can also stimulate the kitten in a mini bath that only gets their lower half of the body wet. A kitten can become cold very quickly so we don't want them to get their whole body wet. The water can help imitate the mom licking them and encourage them to poop.

You can also use a little bit of coconut oil on their butt as a lubricant since you will be stimulating them longer than normal and we don't want them to get any irritation.

Transitioning to Litter Box

When the kitten is around 3.5-4 weeks old, you can start offering them a litter box (we use the cardboard trays that wet food comes in for very small kittens) and either stimulate them over the litter box or put the used baby wipe inside the litter box to entice them to go in there.

Fading Kitten Syndrome Protocol

SYMPTOMS

- Low Body Temperature; the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch
- Extreme Lethargy; not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when touched, can't hold its head up
- Gasping for Breath; mouth-breathing
- Meowing; crying out

This is the only treatment for a fading kitten

Take immediate action, and do not deviate from these instructions

NOTE: Fading episodes can take minutes or hours; there is no way to determine how long it will take for a kitten to become responsive

FIRST - BODY HEAT

1. Immediately burrito-wrap the kitten leaving only the face, eyes, nose and mouth exposed. **Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust or check on them.** Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it's only for a second.
2. Wrap a heating pad set on low around the burrito towel (to avoid burns). Secure it around the towel so it stays in place.

THEN - BLOOD SUGAR

1. Mix sugar or karo syrup with warm water, 1:1 ratio. Put some in a syringe and give the kitten one drop every 3 minutes. **SET YOUR TIMER.**
 2. If the kitten is not swallowing, rub some karo syrup or sugar water on its gums and tongue.
- Alert your counselor immediately that the kitten is fading
 - If the kitten passes, wrap the kitten up in a blanket or paper towel, put in a ziploc bag, and put the kitten in the freezer. Let your counselor know of the outcome, and be prepared to drop off the deceased body at the shelter if necessary.

Basic Care for Gruel Babies (4-6 weeks old)



Kittens who are 3.5 - 4.5 weeks old are at the in-between stage of being bottle fed and eating on their own. At this age their teeth are coming in and they are ready to learn to eat wet and dry food. The first step of the process is to slowly transition them from drinking from a bottle to eating out of a bowl.

Gruel babies should be fed about every 4-6 hours. Kittens are ready to eat canned cat food beginning at 4 weeks, or when teeth emerge. Some kittens take to canned food quickly and hungrily, while others may cling to the bottle. There is no harm in continuing to bottle feed, but remember that kittens must be fully eating on their own by the time they are 8 weeks old. Older kittens who nurse must be supervised carefully for chewing the bottle. If chewing occurs, you must stop bottle feeding immediately, or else the kitten could swallow part or all of the rubber nipple and develop an obstruction. Gruel babies should also be provided fresh water at all times.

STEP 1: Mix the gruel

- Start with the following ingredients:
 - Wet food: Start with a couple of tablespoons
 - KMR Formula: 1 part formula, 2 parts water
- Mix the wet food with the formula until it has a pudding-like consistency
 - Always start with a higher amount of KMR and less wet food. Gradually increase the wet food portion and decrease the KMR over the course of 2 weeks.
- You must throw away any leftover food after the kittens have had their meal, if you leave the food out all day it will go bad and cause health issues for the kitten.

STEP 2: Teaching kittens to eat

The first step is to start offering them gruel in their bottle instead of just kitten formula. Gruel is a combination of canned food, formula, and warm water. Slowly introducing wet food to the kittens' diet will help their bodies adjust to a new food and digest it more easily than a sudden change.

When you first start introducing gruel, it should be mostly KMR with a small amount of wet food added in so the gruel has a soup-like consistency. Once the kittens are happily eating that, you can add a bit more wet food to the mixture every day in order to wean them onto canned food alone. This process should take a week or two.

To get a kitten interested in trying the gruel, offer the gruel with a spoon or use your finger to place a small amount on the kitten's tongue. Some kittens will start licking your finger after they smell it. Then you can slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it right above the food. This will help show the kitten that their food is now on the floor and that they need to learn to eat with their heads bent down. If the kittens do not seem interested in the gruel, try putting a drop of food on their tongue or their nose so they lick it. Once they taste the gruel, they will hopefully start licking it off your finger. If they're still not interested, you can fill a syringe with gruel and feed them that way.

You can supplement the kittens with a bottle every eight hours to ensure that they are getting all the nutrients they need, but always encourage them to eat gruel from the bowl before offering them a bottle.

Things to Keep in Mind

Kittens who nurse after they're four weeks old must be supervised carefully for chewing the bottle. If chewing occurs, you must stop bottle feeding immediately or the kitten could swallow part or all of the rubber nipple and develop an obstruction.

Gruel babies are VERY MESSY. They will walk in the bowl, stick their whole heads in the bowl, and track gruel wherever they walk. Please be patient with them! They are learning and doing the best they can. Mom cats would normally show their kittens what to do and they learn from watching her. Since our kittens are orphaned, you need to show them.

Kittens are not used to eating with their heads down so you cannot just place a bowl down and expect them to know what to do. You need to actively show them how to eat and make sure they are eating enough.

Every 3-4 hours, you should discard any uneaten gruel and provide a fresh batch. Kittens will not eat it if it isn't fresh and warm.

Each kitten should eat from their own bowl. This way you will be able to tell that they're each getting a fair share and eating enough. Feeding multiple kittens out of one bowl also teaches the kittens to compete for food and can encourage food aggression.

It is important to continue weighing your foster kittens every day, after each feeding, to ensure that they are always gaining weight.

Do not feed fish & seafood flavored food, as it is a harder protein to digest and may cause diarrhea. If a kitten refuses to eat the food provided to you, please notify your counselor.

Moving on to Solid Food

When the kittens are 4-5 weeks old, you can also start leaving out some kitten dry food and a shallow bowl of water. It is ok if the kittens are not yet interested in drinking water, but it needs to be out and available in case they are curious. You may want to use a heavy ceramic bowl for water so the kittens can't knock it over. By 5-6 weeks, kittens should be drinking water.

Ideally, by the time they're 5-6 weeks old, your foster kittens will be happily eating dry and wet food on their own.



Final Tips for Successfully Weaning Kittens

1. Water down the gruel mixture so the consistency is more like then KMR they're accustomed to drinking.
2. Heat up the gruel. Remember kittens are used to drinking from a warm bottle.
3. Offer the gruel directly to their mouth with a finger or a spoon since they're not used to eating with their heads down.

During the weaning stage, you should also begin introducing the kittens to the litter box because they should be able to eliminate on their own by about four weeks of age.

STEP 3: Litter box training



Introducing Kittens to the Litter Box

At this age, kittens should begin urinating & defecating on their own. If you notice urine & feces consistently in your foster area, it is a good indication that your kittens do not need to be manually expressed.

Kittens instinctively want to cover their eliminations so using a litter box comes pretty naturally to them. They will likely need some assistance at first, but they basically teach themselves!

When first introducing a kitten to the litter box, pick up the kitten and put them in a clean litter box. Move their little paws around so they can get used to the sensation of digging as well as the feel of the litter.

With small kittens, you definitely need to use a fragrance-free, non-clumping litter. Tiny kittens may try to eat litter and ingesting litter that clumps when wet is potentially harmful because the dust from the litter can solidify in their respiratory or digestive tracts. We recommend using wheat or corn litter or a paper-based pellet litter like Yesterday's News.

For very small kittens around 4-6 weeks old, using the cardboard containers that wet food comes in as their starter litter box is perfect. They are the right size and height for little kittens to easily access. If you give a kitten a litter box that is too tall for them, they won't use it since it's not easily accessible. Once kittens are 6-8 weeks old, they can move to a plastic litter box. However, it still needs to be quite shallow in order for them to get in and out comfortably. You can also use aluminum baking pans or small cardboard boxes - particularly if the kittens have diarrhea. It is also a good idea to have pee pads underneath the boxes just in case the kittens have accidents.

When kittens are first learning to use the litter box, it's a good idea to keep them in small spaces. A playpen or a bathroom is the perfect environment for litter training since they have enough space to live comfortably without forgetting where the box is located.

Always make sure the litter box is clean. If the box is dirty, they will not want to use it! The box needs to be cleaned at least twice daily. You will also need to dump the contents of the litter box entirely every few days and clean it with dish soap. Don't forget to have a back-up litter box while the other one is being cleaned.



Common Problems while Litter Training

The more space the kittens have access to, the more litter boxes they will need. Especially when kittens are just learning how to use the litter box, you want to set them up for success. If the box is too far away, they may forget. Since kittens do like to cover their poop, if they can't find a litter box, they will typically eliminate under couches or beds or in corners rather than right out in the open. If they repeatedly have accidents in the same spot, put another litter box in that spot!

You can encourage the kittens to use the litter box by gently returning them to their litter box every 15–20 minutes while they're playing. Similarly, if you see them squatting somewhere besides the litter box, pick them up and place them inside the box.

Never punish a kitten for having an accident. They won't understand and they didn't do it on purpose. Instead, wipe up the mess with toilet paper and tear up little pieces of the toilet paper and put them in the litter box. The kittens will smell it and learn to go to the bathroom in the litter box.

If kittens are having a particularly hard time learning, you can also try Dr. Elsey's Kitten Attract litter. It is very helpful in enticing kittens to use the litter box.

Kittens tend to have accidents outside of the litter box if they have medical issues like diarrhea. When they aren't feeling well, they may be unable to make it to the box in time. If you notice your kitten was using the litter box regularly and then stopped, the kitten may not be feeling well and you should contact us for further assistance.

Basic Care for Weaned Kittens (6+ weeks)

By six to seven weeks old, your kittens should be independent eaters. Dry food should be available at all times, but offer wet food 3x a day (morning, afternoon, and evening) to maximize growth.

During this stage it's important to socialize kittens and expose them to new situations and environments. Keep experiences positive as they learn about new sounds, smells, places, and faces. Play time provides stimulation, encourages socialization and releases excess energy. Cat toys don't have to be fancy or expensive and they often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag or toilet paper rolls. Don't leave your foster kittens alone with any toys that could be easily ingested or cause harm to them.

Now that kittens are using a litter box, be sure to scoop the box at least two times daily. Every other day, dump the litter, clean the box with a mild detergent.



Grooming & Bathing

Kittens can be messy, but “less is more” is the general rule when it comes to cleaning them. Over-bathed kittens can develop dry skin or become cold if not dried properly. Here are the levels of cleaning (depending on how messy the kitten is!):

Spot cleaning – use a baby or pet wipe, or a warm damp cloth and gently wipe the mess. For kittens with food stuck to their face, only use a warm damp cloth.

Half bath – fill a bowl or sink with 1-2 inches of warm water. Only bathe the messy part of the kitten (such as its rear end). If needed, use baby or pet shampoo, or Dawn dish soap. Use a cup to scoop water and gently rinse off any soap. Thoroughly dry the wet parts of the kitten with a towel and/or blow dryer on low until the fur is completely dry.

Full bath – if the kitten needs a more thorough bath, make sure you do not get water on its head, especially the eyes, nose, and ears!

How to Give a Kitten a Flea Bath

Fleas might be small, but they are a BIG deal, especially on kittens under four weeks old. Not only do they cause itching and skin irritation, but they can also spread viruses, bacteria, and tapeworms. Fleas can even cause anemia and death in young kittens.

Since small kittens do not have that much blood, they are virtually defenseless against fleas. Tiny kittens also do not groom themselves yet, so they are not scratching the fleas away. You should be concerned about anemia if a kitten has a severe flea infestation and also has signs of lethargy, low appetite, breathing difficulty, or pale gums. You can help some kittens survive flea anemia simply by removing the fleas and providing supportive care, but tiny kittens with severe blood loss may not survive.

- DO NOT use a topical flea treatment on a kitten.
- DO NOT use flea collars or sprays. These products aren't approved for kittens and can kill them.
- If the kitten is under two months old, the safest way to treat the fleas is by bathing the kitten.



ONLY bathe a kitten if it is absolutely necessary. Getting a bath can be a terrifying or traumatic experience for kittens so proceed with caution and care. In many cases, baby wipes are enough to clean up a small mess on a kitten. However, kittens should receive a bath if they have fleas, or if they are extremely dirty from bodily excretions or any other filth.

1. Set up a heating pad or Snuggle Safe and a blanket where the kitten can warm up after their bath. You will need two towels, blue Dawn dish soap, a hair dryer, and a flea comb.
2. Run the bath water until it is comfortably warm. If it feels too hot or cold, it is not the right temperature for the kitten. Kittens under 4 weeks old cannot control their body temperature so it is very important to keep the kitten warm throughout the bathing process.

3. Hold the kitten in your non-dominant hand.
4. Avoid getting the kitten's head wet. Only bathe the kitten from neck to tail.
5. If the kitten has fleas, create a ring of soap around the neck before bathing the kitten. This will prevent fleas from crawling up onto the kitten's head, where they can avoid being killed.
6. Use the liquid soap and warm water to quickly bathe the kitten. While you want to be thorough, you also want to be fast. Try to keep the entire process under two minutes.
7. Rinse the kitten thoroughly to remove the soap.
8. Immediately towel dry the kitten to get them warm.
9. Use the flea comb to comb through the kitten's fur. Fleas particularly love kittens' heads and the area near the tail and genitals. Fleas should be disposed of in a cup of warm soapy water.
10. If necessary, spot-clean the kitten's head with a washcloth. Rather than rinsing the face, use a warm, wet washcloth to get rid of excess soap or dirt. Avoid getting the kitten's nose and mouth wet.
11. Use the hair dryer to dry the kitten. Keep the hair dryer a foot away from the kitten and on a low setting.
12. Once the kitten is dry and flea-free, place them on the heating pad and blanket to get warm and cozy.



Treatments Required

Vaccines

Beginning at 4 weeks of age (or 1lb), all kittens will be vaccinated with an FVRCP booster every 2-3 weeks until they are adopted.

- **FVRCP** – This vaccine protects against three main feline-specific viruses (feline rhinotracheitis, calici, and panleukopenia)

Deworming

Once the kittens open their eyes which is around 2 weeks of age, all kittens will be dewormed. Depending on their age is the type of dewormer they will get. The dewormer is required to get rid of intestinal worms. Each dewormer given gets rid of a certain type of intestinal worm.

Flea Treatment

Once the kittens open their eyes, all kittens will get treatment for fleas every month. Flea treatment is used to repel, kill fleas and other parasites.

Snap test

We test all of our kittens for feline immunodeficiency virus (FeLV) once kittens are older than 4 weeks.

Microchip

Microchip implant is done at 5 weeks to provide permanent ID.

Spay/Neuter

Once kittens reach 8 weeks of age and 2+lb. They will be scheduled for spay/neuter and will be officially available for adoption.



SECTION C: Socializing Your Kittens

Exploring the World

Our goal is to develop friendly, confident kittens who will thrive in any adoptive home. While some kittens may naturally be more shy, or have come into our care under-socialized, there are plenty of ways to increase their sociability while in foster. All kittens will benefit from the following exposure:



Noise – A calm, quiet environment is a wonderful and relaxing place for kittens. It is also important to get them used to common noises they may hear in a noisier household. Start with low volume noises at a distance (for example, turn the vacuum on in another room) for 5-10 minutes. Observe the kittens' behavior. If they are acting shy or get startled easily, reduce the volume and/or distance. If the kittens are relaxed, slowly increase the volume and frequency. Talk radio can also be a great way for kittens to get accustomed to common noises.

Terrain – Have novelty items that kittens can climb, explore, and play on. You can use cat trees, scratching posts, and plenty of cat toys. You can also use cheaper items like cardboard boxes of various sizes, bubble wrap, and paper towel rolls. Just be sure all items are “kitten proof” and do not present a choking hazard. Change out or re-arrange these items daily to keep things new and interesting!

People & Animals – Host kitten parties and invite your friends and family over to play with the kittens. Just be sure everyone washes their hands before and after (especially if they have cats at home). If you have a cat-friendly dog, this can be a wonderful opportunity to expose your foster kittens to dogs (under strict supervision).

Play – A confident cat is a confident hunter. Play time is essential! The best type of play is interactive, so be sure to spend at least 15 minutes twice a day playing with your foster kittens. If the kittens are extremely active, make sure they also take breaks to rest and eat, as kittens who overexert themselves are at risk for [hypoglycemia](#) (see: Common Medical Concerns).

Working with Shy/Fearful Kittens

Under-socialized kittens should be housed in smaller spaces that minimize hiding opportunities. Avoid spaces with areas you cannot easily access (i.e. under beds, behind furniture, etc.). You can create easy-to-reach hiding spots by setting up cardboard boxes or other open containers. If you do not have a suitable area, contact your counselor to borrow a crate or kitty condo.



Handling – Kittens should be handled for many brief sessions each day. Use a small towel or blanket to safely pick up the kitten. This will make the kitten feel more comfortable while also protecting your hands from any bites or scratches. “Burrito wrap” the kitten and hold it gently but firmly in your arms. Ignore any hissing or growling. With one finger gently pet the kitten on its nose, chin, or cheeks. Once the kitten has remained calm in your arms for a couple minutes, you can release it. If you are working with multiple shy kittens, handle each kitten separately.

Toys – Sit as close as the kitten will allow without running away. Use a wand toy (or a shoelace can work well), to entice the kitten to play. It is okay if the kitten does not play at first. Even watching the toy move around is a good first step! Once the kitten starts swatting at and chasing the toy, use the toy to guide the kitten into the open and move across the floor. Never leave string-based toys or shoelaces unattended with foster kittens.

Food & Treats – Use tasty treats or food to encourage shy kittens to approach you. Human baby food (without onion) can be useful if the kitten does not respond to regular cat food. Put a dab on your finger or a spoon and have the kitten lick it off. Slowly, lure the kitten closer and closer to you before giving it the reward.

Advice for Bitey Kittens

Biting is normal cat and kitten behavior. Cats of all shapes and sizes, both wild and domestic, like hunting, stalking, and pouncing on prey. To get a kitten to not bite your hands or feet, you just need to redirect their attention.



Do not punish the kitten for biting you - they won't understand! Instead, show them something even more enticing than your hands and feet to bite.

Do not encourage or allow the kitten to play with your hands and feet at all. They won't understand if sometimes they are allowed and sometimes they are not allowed to play with your fingers. A kitten, particularly a kitten who is not with other kittens, cannot tell when they are biting you too hard so if your kitten starts playing with your hands or feet, stop moving, make your hand or foot go limp, and say "Ouch!" in a loud voice.

Since kittens are more likely to attack a moving target, offer them a toy and move it around and play with them. By doing this, you are teaching the kitten that hands and feet are not fun, but interactive toys are. Wand toys are great for redirection and so are balls with jingle bells inside. They can follow the movement and stalk and pounce the toy. Teaching your kitten proper play behavior and playing with them daily will offer them appropriate outlets for their energy and help them grow into happy, well-adjusted adult cats.

Kittens get bored easily so a variety of toys will be helpful distractions. There are many kinds to choose from including wand toys, ball toys, track toys, kicker toys, and crinkle toys. You should play with the toys with your kitten together. You can't expect the kitten to play with the toys on their own. They need you to play with them to satisfy their social and predatory drives. Interactive toys also help strengthen the bond between you and your kitten by letting you share fun and positive experiences.

Once playtime is over, the kitten should be rewarded with a treat or a snack so they feel like they successfully hunted their prey!

Single Kitten Syndrome

Single kittens tend to get bored and lonely and will entertain themselves in potentially destructive ways; this is what is known as “Single Kitten Syndrome.” Kittens are curious and need constant stimulation. Kittens learn proper cat behavior from their siblings and mothers so kittens who are living isolated from other kittens and cats can delay their emotional and social development. Kittens that grow up with their siblings or similarly aged kitten friends tend to be happier and better socialized pets than those who are isolated at an early age.

Without a kitten companion to wrestle and play, a kitten may bite and attack your hands and feet. If you tolerate the scratches and bites as kittens, they will continue this behavior as adults, with much stronger bites and scratches. With a kitten friend, however, they will learn to play gently because they let each other know not to bite or scratch too hard.

Two kittens will also burn extra energy by playing and chasing each other. Giving them an outlet for their “kitten crazies” or “zoomies” means they will have less energy to engage in destructive and unwanted behaviors like biting.



SECTION D: Frequently Asked Questions

Indoor Only

All of our foster kittens must be kept 100% indoors, with no risk of getting outside. At this age they have compromised immune systems that are susceptible to illness and disease. Foster kittens may not be taken outside at any time, unless **secured in a travel carrier.**

If You Have an Adopter

If you have an adopter for one or more of your foster kittens you must let your counselor know. The interested adopter must be willing to submit an adoption application and provide the following information prior to receiving the kitten:

- Person's full name
- Phone number
- Email
- Street Address

In order to be approved for adoption, the interested adopter must be able to meet all of our adoption requirements (including paying an adoption fee) and must wait to pick-up their kitten until after they are spayed/neutered.

PLEASE NOTE: You may not transfer the care of your foster kitten to anyone else without the knowledge and permission of your counselor. This includes a potential adopter.



What If I Decide to Keep the Kitten?

Great! If you decide to keep your kitten, you must let the counselor know. There will be an adoption fee required, but we must make sure that they are spayed/neutered and snap tested prior to finalizing the adoption. We will not be providing any supplies or medical care for the kitten after the adoption is final.

How Will My Kittens Get Adopted?

Once the kittens have reached at least 2-2.5 lbs and are over two months of age, they will be scheduled for spay/neuter surgery if they are healthy. After surgery they will have the following options in which they can be placed up for adoption:

1. Stray Cat Alliance Adoption Events - If there is currently no space available at the NKLA Pet Adoption Center you are still able to give your fosters a chance at adoption by taking them to

Stray Cat Alliance Adoption Events or bringing them to HQ for the weekend so our adoption coordinator can take them. The events are held every weekend at a local pet supply store.

2. Stray Cat Alliance Website - Foster kittens are featured on our website at www.straycatalliance.org. In order for kittens to get good applications, it is very important for you to send your counselor good pictures & videos. Your counselor or adoption coordinator will get in contact with you about applications for your fosters.
3. Stray Cat Alliance Social Media - Foster kittens can also be featured in our social media such as facebook, Instagram etc (Pg. 2). Tag & Hashtag your foster content (#straycatalliance) or send directly to <https://straycatalliance.tumblr.com/submit>

NOTE: If you would like to continue fostering your kittens for a longer period of time, you are REQUIRED to provide food and litter until you return them or they are adopted.

Thank you so much for fostering with Stray Cat Alliance. If you have any questions, please contact your foster counselor or SafeAtHome@StrayCatAlliance.org or 310-776-5950.