

# UNDER-SOCIALIZED KITTEN



**Aurora  
Animal  
Shelter**



sudden movements, which is how many children express themselves. All children and parents are different, therefore, there is not an exact age range that these kittens are best suited for. However, it's typically recommended that these kittens are not adopted into a home with children younger than 12 years of age.

## WHAT IS AN UNDER-SOCIALIZED KITTEN?

Under-socialized kittens have had little to no contact with humans prior to entering the shelter. They are also known as “feral” or “semi-feral” kittens. After undergoing a behavior modification program to provide them with the socialization and desensitization they need, they are molded into friendly feline companions. However, these kittens will likely be fearful in new situations throughout their lifetime. Helping your new kitten form positive associations to new things and situations will help them to grow into a successful, well-adjusted adult cat. If socialization is not done correctly or is not done enough, they can turn into an anti-social adult or a cat that will frequently hide. It's important to realize that if you're adopting an under-socialized kitten, they will require lots of love, patience and time.

## ARE UNDER-SOCIALIZED KITTENS A GOOD FIT FOR A HOME WITH CHILDREN?

Though they are just kittens, under-socialized kittens are generally not a good fit for a home with young children. These kittens tend to be much more sensitive to loud noises and

## DO UNDER-SOCIALIZED KITTENS DO WELL WITH OTHER CATS IN THE HOME?

Another confident or friendly cat can vastly improve an under-socialized kitten's behavior over time. They can “mock” the confident cat's behavior and grow their confidence over time. Of course, a slow introduction to your resident cat is imperative to the sanctity of their relationship. See our handout “Introducing Your New Cat to Your Home” for more information on our recommended process.



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## HOW CAN I EXPECT MY KITTEN TO ACT WHEN THEY COME HOME?

Sometimes, these kittens will display fearful behaviors when they are in a new or uncomfortable situation. These behaviors can include hissing, swatting, spitting, growling, etc. This is normal and can easily be modified if you are utilizing positive reinforcement techniques. Offering a delicious food item or engaging in fun play with your kitten helps create positive associations between you and them, while also encouraging bonding. Fearful behaviors are likely to subside if socialization and acclimation guidelines are followed accordingly.

## HOW DO I HELP MY UNDER-SOCIALIZED KITTEN ADJUST INTO MY HOME?

- Adjusting to a new, home environment will be a long process. Isolate your new kitten to a confined space or room in your home. Provide hiding places for your kitten. It's natural for them to hide and they will feel more comfortable in their new environment if they have "safe spaces" to revert to, if needed. Shoe boxes, regular cardboard boxes, kitty condos, cat carriers and many similar objects can be utilized as hiding places. Review the "Introducing Your New Cat to Your Home" handout for further information.
- Be sure to "kitten proof" your home! Ensure that small spaces and/or holes are covered completely. Windows should always be closed,

or screens should be thoroughly checked to ensure they are in good shape. Cord covers should be utilized to prevent your kitten from chewing on cords.

- Ensure your kitten has access to multiple different toys in your absence. If they do not have access to toys, they will likely find inappropriate "toys," such as toilet paper!
- Practice handling your kitten frequently. Pick them up in your arms frequently to get them used to being held. Touch their ears, nose, paws, nails, tail, body, etc. This is important for many different situations such as veterinarian appointments, nail trimming, etc.
- Avoid wrestling and rough play with your kitten. Do not use your fingers as toys! Hands are for petting and not biting. If you encourage this behavior frequently, it will become engrained and difficult to fix or erase.

## HOW DO I BEST INTERACT WITH MY UNDER-SOCIALIZED KITTEN?

Feeding the kitten delicious food when you are interacting with them helps form positive associations to the presence of new people and/or things. Interactive play can also be a great tool to help your kitten make positive associations. Excellent toy options include; Da' Bird, Da' Butterfliar, Cat Dancer, etc. Loud noises, large gatherings of people, and similar situations can cause easily induce stress. Avoid these situations whenever possible.

**TIP!** *Never use punishment techniques when handling your kitten. When kittens are scared, they will often display behaviors such as hissing, swatting, or growling. Punishing these behaviors will make your new kitten fearful of you and can easily lead to aggressive behaviors now or in the future.*

