



Cats, Babies, and Young Children

Welcoming a new baby or raising young children alongside your cat can be a wonderful experience—but it takes some preparation. Even if *you* know what changes are coming, your cat doesn't! Here are some tips to help everyone adjust smoothly.

Preparing Your Cat for a New Baby

- 1. Limit extra attention before the baby arrives.**

Avoid giving your cat *more* attention than usual right before the baby comes. If your cat gets used to extra cuddling and playtime, it can be confusing and upsetting when that attention decreases after the baby's arrival.

- 2. Establish a new routine early.**

Your schedule will naturally shift once the baby arrives. Set consistent times now for feeding, litterbox cleaning, and one-on-one attention. This helps your cat adjust gradually to the new household rhythm.

- 3. Introduce infant-related objects.**

Allow your cat to explore the baby's crib, swing, changing table, diapers, and clothing ahead of time. Pair these introductions with treats so your cat associates the new sights and smells with positive rewards.

- 4. Desensitize your cat to baby noises and toys.**

Babies cry, coo, and their toys often make unexpected sounds. Help your cat adjust by playing recordings of babies at a low volume or turning on noisy toys occasionally. Reward your cat with treats or attention during these sessions, and gradually increase the volume and length of exposure over time.

Cats and Young Children

If you are introducing a cat or kitten to a home with young children, keep in mind that even the most patient cats can get overwhelmed. Kids often don't realize that chasing, tail-pulling, or hugging can upset or hurt a cat. Here's how to make sure the relationship is safe and positive:

- 1. Teach children safe handling skills.**

Show your kids how to gently hold, pet, and play with the cat. Teach them that pulling a tail is painful and that hugging can make a cat feel trapped and uncomfortable.

2. **Let children help—but supervise.**

As kids grow, they may want to help feed or clean up after the cat. Encourage them to assist, but always supervise these activities. A child should never be the sole caregiver for a cat. Always monitor feeding times and litterbox maintenance.

Remember: if a child loses interest or can't manage the responsibility, it is not a reason to rehome the cat.

3. **Give your cat space to retreat.**

Provide your cat with a "safe haven" where they can get away from the household hustle and bustle. This could be a spare room or a high perch that offers at least six feet of separation. Teach children to respect these spaces, and avoid crowding the cat, especially near its food and litterbox areas.

Important: Never leave a young child or baby unattended with a kitten or cat.