



# Cardinal Animal Hospital

[www.cardinalanimalhosp.com](http://www.cardinalanimalhosp.com)

2301 Fleming Road

Greensboro, NC 27410

336-668-9475

## GOOD BEHAVIOR FOR KITTENS

Exploring and playing are quite natural for most cats, especially kittens. However, these natural behaviors can escalate into unwanted scratching or biting of furniture, people, or other pets if the behaviors are not addressed with appropriate training. The playtime exercises suggested below will give you some ideas as to how to play or not to play with your kitten, while simultaneously teaching your kitten good behavior.

Training simply involves using playing tactics with appropriate toys. Toys that dangle or could be chased are usually well liked by kittens. These types of toys can be purchased at pet stores or sometimes created at home. Ping-pong balls and bouncy balls are sure favorites to use for swatting and chasing. Kittens are also fond of catnip stuffed toys. Short fishing rods, or plastic rods with strings securely attached can be used to cast small rubber, stuffed, or feather toys. You can use your imagination in creating some of these toys at home but make certain these toys do not present a choking hazard for your kitten or other pets in the household. Also, beware of houseplants that may be poisonous to your kitten or cat, such as a Tiger Lily, Easter Lily, Philodendron, and Dieffenbachia (search [www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org) for a more extensive list of common household poisonous plants). As well as certain plants, be careful of loose strings or pieces of yarn that can be ingested. **Strings or pieces of yarn are a lot of fun for your kitten but make certain to use these toys under supervision.**

Before having playtime with your kitten be sure your kitten is in a safe environment. Sometimes barricades or closed doors can help the kitten stay in an area that has been cat-proofed. However, do not use punishments such as taste or odor repellants or traps to keep your kitten in certain areas. Also, NEVER use physical punishment to deter your kitten from unwanted behaviors or explorations. Using a squirt bottle filled with water to spray or a can with coins or pebbles to shake for noise can sometimes help.

**Playtime 1:** Interacting with your kitten should always be initiated by you and not the kitten. Choose a toy to play with and allow the kitten to become engaged in the play. Keep the kitten busy with the play and alternate toys if necessary. The longer the playtime the better so the kitten will have a good workout and not consider attacking you or the furniture. Also, while playing with the kitten be sure not to use your fingers or toes for the kitten to swat or bite since this form of play will teach the kitten it is appropriate to swat or bite at you and others. Thus, using the toys will help reinforce to the kitten that playtime does not involve hurting others or furniture.

**Playtime 2:** This playtime involves scratching posts, which will be used for scratching while you are not necessarily interacting with the kitten. The scratching posts allow kittens and cats to stretch and condition their claws. Provide post either from a pet store or homemade with appealing textures and form. Carpet, sisal or coarse fabric is an appropriate cover for the structures. As for form, be certain the post is sturdy and will not topple over if the kitten jumps on top. Also, make sure it is tall enough for a good stretch. The introduction can be made more attractive to the kitten by attaching a dangling toy to the post or rubbing catnip on the surface areas. When you see your kitten scratching the post, reward the kitten with a food treat. This will help reinforce to the kitten that the post is an appropriate place to stretch instead of the furniture. If furniture scratching becomes a problem then try adding a post to that area, remembering to reward with a food treat when the post is used.

### **Does trimming a cat's nails help prevent excessive scratching?**

By regularly trimming your cat's nails it is possible to help reduce a cat's need to scratch. The nail trimming service is provided at Cardinal Animal Hospital or you can condition your kitten to accept you to do the trimming. Please contact Cardinal Animal Hospital to receive a nail trimming demonstration from one of our veterinarians or technicians if you are interested in safely trimming your kitten's nails at home.

We hope this information on kitten behavior will be helpful. Our professionals here will continue striving to provide outstanding care for you and your pet. Thank you for your business and please contact us if you have any further questions or concerns. Cardinal Animal Hospital