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How to Gentle a Kitten

Handling an unruly cat can sometimes be difficult, but by training him from kittenhood to be handled, you'll be able to groom, clip toenails, and examine him routinely with his full cooperation.

Difficulty Level: easy **Time Required:** 5 minutes (per session)

Here's How:

1. Gently pick up your kitten at least once a day and speak soothingly to him in a soft, quiet voice. Hold the kitten for 5 minutes or so before setting him down in a favorite spot
2. After a few days, gradually sit down while holding the kitten. Talk to him quietly and pet him gently. Don't encourage rough play (scratching, biting). If he tries it, tell him firmly, "No." and gently put him down.
3. When kitty is comfortable with the first two steps, stroll around the room holding him and talking to him. Don't distract him with outside elements; he should be focused on **you**.
4. Put the kitten on a well-lighted table and stroke him. You can talk baby-talk to him if you want. It's okay.
5. Next day, on the table, pick up a paw and press gently to extend the nails, examine the nails and toes, then gently examine the foot and leg. Get to know the normal feel of his limbs.
6. Back to the table again. This time, examine the kitten's ears visually. You may have to move his head about so you can see inside his ears. Feel the outside of the ears to familiarize yourself with them.
7. On the table again, gently palpitate (press gently) the kitten's abdomen. Stroke his back and sides, feeling for any abnormalities. Again, you're familiarizing yourself with his normal characteristics.
8. Open the kitten's mouth and look at the teeth. Rub your finger along the length of the teeth starting at the gum. Insert your index finger in the corner of his mouth to view the back teeth.
9. By now, your kitten should be totally comfortable with your handling of him, so grooming, teeth cleaning and toenail clipping should be a breeze. Give him a treat for being such a cooperative kitten.

Tips:

1. These steps should take about five minutes per session. Start with one session per day, and add more as needed, depending on the kitten's tolerance for handling.
2. As with all other forms of training, don't make it an adversarial experience. When kitty gets tired, or if he's just having a bad day, give him a hug and gently put him down. You can always try again tomorrow.
3. As your kitten grows older, inspect him at least once a week. You can combine the inspection with his grooming session.

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