

Four tips for helping cats and kids get along

From: *Think Like a Cat* or *Starting From Scratch*, by Pam Johnson Bennett

Cats and kids can have wonderful relationships. Here are some ways to help develop the right approach toward kitty.

- Children shouldn't have complete responsibility for the cat. You may feel that having a cat will teach children but the cat may suffer as a result. Responsibilities placed on children should be age-appropriate and you need to oversee daily. If you place your child in charge of feeding, for example, set out the pre-measured daily amount to ensure kitty gets his correct portion.
- Kids may chase and wrestle, and that's not fun from a cat's point of view. The technique I use is to get a fishing pole-type toy and show the child how to move the toy as if it's a mouse or a bird.
- Explain that the child is to never poke the cat. As kitty sees there's a safe distance between himself and the child, he'll relax enough to enjoy the game. You can designate certain toys for each child so they can have their own special play sessions with kitty.
- For young children who want to pet the cat, start by using a stuffed animal for practice. Show how to pet with an open hand. The child can practice petting, holding, and if age-appropriate, even picking up the cat. Then use the technique on kitty. Young children have a natural desire to want to grasp the fur so by practicing gentleness on the stuffed kitty, your real cat won't be fearful based on negative experiences.
- Educate. A child doesn't understand how sensitive a cat's body is. Don't lecture, but rather, work to establish a relationship between the two. Kitty needs to feel she can trust and that's only established by being gentle and kind.

For more specifics, order *Think Like a Cat* or *Starting From Scratch*
by Pam Johnson Bennett

<http://pets.yahoo.com/blog/catbehavior/profile/pam-johnson-bennett/>