

American Cat Fanciers Association

Preparing Your Cat For Show

By [Jody L. Rugenstein](#)

Where did your "Show Kitten" come from?

Whether you bred your show quality kitten or got him from a reputable breeder, he started being a show cat from the time he was born. Long before he was born if you consider the years of background study, breeding experience, diet, etc. conducted by the breeder prior to his birth. The personality, health and appearance of your kitten come from both genetics and environment.

Infant animals of all types begin brain development before birth. However, immediately after birth, developmental changes occur so rapidly it is past our imagination. Learning experiences and the environment help to shape life long behavior. It is never too early to begin helping your kitten to become that "Show Stopper" that we all strive for.

Earliest Training:

Most females enjoy showing their babies off. Right from the first moments of birth kits feel that humans are as much a part of their world as "Momma". As many "strangers" as possible should handle them after they have had their initial series of shots. Your show cat will have a great deal of handling, by you, and by strangers, for its entire life. Training for this handling begins almost from birth. In the kitten's mind, there is very little difference in laying on your lap being stroked with your hand. To then being placed on a grooming table and groomed with the softest toothbrush and on up through the weeks to being groomed with a steel comb or brush. You will want to teach your cat to enjoy this special time with you. Always end with lots of pats and compliments. You'll find that the biggest problem is getting them to take turns. A few will think that the entire grooming time should belong to them.

Cats regard eye contact as a signal of aggression. To modify this instinct takes a great deal of patience, but it will pay off in the show ring. It is almost impossible to Judge a Cat or Kitten without making eye contact! From the time that their eyes are open, look into their eyes with love. At the same time, talk to them, pet them and make your kit as comfortable as possible. As they grow up in this type of environment, you should have a Cat who is not threatened by humans.

Just as important, is that their world includes other cats . . . not just their own nest mates. If the baby was born at your home, as early as three to four weeks, take the babies out of their own area and show them to the other cats. Much mutual smelling and getting acquainted goes on at this time. At approximately five to six weeks, try to introduce them to some older kittens and let them try some (very well supervised) play with the "big kids." This interaction should take place in the babies own area. In familiar surroundings, they should have enough self-confidence to accept the older kits and enjoy them. At seven to ten weeks they should get down and play with everyone and will usually immediately fit right into the clan.

Acquiring a Cat or Kitten from another cattery:

When this is case, the getting acquainted period is quite different. You will want to isolate the new kit for two weeks. Every cattery has their own bacteria and viruses that the cats have become immune to. Of course, the new comer has been FELV tested and has a clean bill of health from YOUR vet. They may require this visit in some states to take place within 72 hours, or your sales contract may have time limitations.

Some cats that arrive with health certificates are very questionable. Check for fleas, ear mites, internal parasites, fungus and just over all good condition. A good way to start this check is with a bath, as your hands literally go over every inch of the Cat. The other advantage that an early bath has, is to remove "other cattery" smells.

After your quarantine period we've found it wise to cage the cat in the cattery, but separated, from your other cats. This way they can see, smell and get used to the new guy without danger. After a week or so of this you can allow them to mingle. Keep a close eye on things for a period. It's been our experience that it's older females who resent strangers. Our guess is that they are afraid of a shift in the pecking order.