

Kitten Enrichment User Guide

What is Enrichment?

Environmental or behavioral enrichment is the process of manipulating an animal's environment to increase physical activity and create opportunities for species typical behavior that satisfies the animal's physical and psychological needs. It reduces stress and therefore promotes overall health by increasing an animal's perception of control over their environment and by occupying their time. Techniques utilized to enrich an environment generally fall into 5 categories:

- Food based enrichment
- Sensory enrichment (sight, smell, touch, hear, taste)
- Novel objects
- Social enrichment
- Positive Training

Who needs it?

All captive living animals need environmental enrichment whether they live in a zoo, shelter, laboratory, sanctuary, or your home.

How do I get started?

Think about what kittens would normally do if they lived outdoors. For example, cats stalk, hunt, and catch small prey items punctuated by climbing, running, and resting during a normal day. Look for activities that encourage or mimic these:

Food based enrichment – hide a small ball filled with food so she can hunt and find it, then it will zip around the house like a mouse when batted and pushed encouraging chasing, catching, and consuming behaviors.

Sensory Enrichment – place a fleece covered (touch) perch near a window so that your cat can climb up and observe (sight, hear, smell) birds and squirrels at a strategically placed feeder.

Novel Objects – offer your cat empty cardboard boxes and paper bags to climb on, around, and through to explore one afternoon.

Social enrichment – multi pet households where the animals are in stable healthy relationships offer valuable opportunities to be social with their own species. Cross species socialization between you and your cat are important too. Remember avoiding punishment and creating predictable interactions for your pet are critical here.

- Positive Training- when it is fun, everyone likes to learn something new. Be sure sessions are not frustrating, and never use techniques that make your pet fearful. For more information see www.clickertraining.com

To help get you started we have attached a 7-week calendar to help ensure your kittens are enriched daily. This calendar is just a starting point, kittens can and would benefit from certainly have multiple opportunities for enrichment every day!

Two Weeks Old

Calm/soft music: play some classical music on a low volume for 30 minutes.

Read aloud: read aloud to your kittens in a soft voice for 15-30 minutes (your kids may enjoy doing this as well.)

Purrito Wrap: Wrap up under socialized kitten in a soft blanket or towel, pet on head. Keep this interaction to only a minute or so.

****Stuffed animal**: Offer your kittens a soft and plush stuffed animal to snuggle with.

Three Weeks Old

Lunch Bag: Offer your kittens an empty paper bag to explore.

Faux Exam: Check your kitten's paws, look inside their ears and mouth, and run your fingers down their tail. This helps prepare them for future veterinary exams, which will be less stressful for them.

Feliway Spray: Offer a toy item with feliway spritzed on it. Feliway is a synthetic cat pheromone.

Ping Pong Ball: Offer a loose ping pong ball.

Toy Mouse: Offer mouse toy.



Feather in Cupcake Wrapper: Stick feather in a cupcake wrapper and offer to kittens.

Jingle Ball in T-Paper Tube: Place a toy cat ball inside a toilet paper tube, then fold in the ends of the tube so the ball remains inside.

Four Weeks Old

****Bubbles**: Blow some bubbles and allow kittens to investigate and chase.

****Wand Teaser**: Use a commercial wand toy to encourage kittens to pounce and play. You can easily make one by tying a string to a ruler or stick and then attach a toy to the other end.

****Empty Food/Soda Box**: Offer kitten an empty food container or soda box to explore.

Pipe Cleaner Spiral: Offer pipe cleaner that has been twisted to form a spiral.



Aluminum Foil Ball: Offer crumpled up aluminum foil ball.

Five Weeks Old

Paper Fan: Attach paper fan to side of kitten's kennel.



Catnip Square: Offer square felt toy with ribbon, it is filled with catnip.

Cardboard box: Offer a medium sized cardboard box for your kittens to explore. Cut hole in the sides and places toys inside for an increased level of fun!

Tulle Ball: Offer tulle ball toy.

Loose Feather: Offer a loose feather to investigate.

Six Weeks Old

Cardboard Ball: Offer a cardboard ball made from toilet paper tube.



****Clicker Training**: You will need a clicker and small pieces of yummy treats for this activity. Click the clicker and then toss a treat. Repeat this process over and over for several minutes. The kittens will begin to associate the sound of the clicker with yummy treats.

Walk out of site of your kittens and press the clicker. Reward any kittens that came to find the “click” with a yummy treat. Play this game for only a couple of minutes.

****Frozen Wet Food Treat**: Freeze a small amount of wet food in a mold (bottle tops, half of an Easter egg, or an ice cube tray.) Offer the kittens the frozen treat.

Flexi-straw: Offer kittens the flexi-straw (straw is made of corn, not plastic.)



Catnip Ice Cube: Freeze a small amount of dried catnip and water in a mold (bottle tops, half of an Easter egg, or an ice cube tray.) Offer the kittens the frozen treat.

Kitty Pinata: Attach kitty pinata to the side of the kitten’s kennel.



Seven Weeks Old

****Brush Kittens**: Brush kittens from head to tail, then brush tail. Keep sessions less than a minute long for each kitten and no longer to ensure this time remains positive.

Toilet Paper Sun: Offer kittens toilet paper sun toys.

Tissue Paper Ball: Offer kittens crumbled up tissue paper.

****Laser Pointer**: Use a laser pointer to encourage kittens to investigate, pounce, and run!

Eight Weeks Old

Diet in Ice Cube Tray: Place their kitten kibble in an ice cube tray, then hide kibble by placing a few of their toys on top.

Dried Catnip: Sprinkle some catnip for them to investigate.

****Treat Inside Crumpled Paper**: Place a yummy treat on a piece of paper and then crumple the paper around the treat for kittens to explore.

Note: Items marked with ** were not provided in your foster enrichment kit.