

Cats and kittens can be great companions for children, but younger kids need supervision and encouragement for the interaction to be a positive one. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Never try to force the interaction and never try to hold a cat that does not want to be held. This will very often lead to a scratch or bite.
- If the cat tolerates being held, have your child sit down whenever he/she wants to hold the cat and make sure the cat's backend is always supported. Keep in mind that many cats do not like to be held but do enjoy sitting next to a lap. Try having your child give the cat treats by placing them in their open palm and offering them to the cat. Yummy treats will help the cat make good associations with your kid.
- It is important to let the cat approach the child, rather than vice versa. Some cats are scared or intimidated by small children.
- Most cats don't like to be bothered while they are eating and definitely should not be bothered while using the litter box.
- Remember to play with toys that keep the cat at a distance from you. Children often are not able to tell when the cat is about to go after their fingers or toes or mistake them for toys, so it's better to keep the cat at a safe distance. Using wand toys, or laser pointers are fun for both the kid and the cat!
- Never try to pull or pick up a cat by her tail, legs, head or ears. Teach your child to pet lightly and let the cat walk away when it wants to.
- You should always have a place where the cat can get away from the child (or dog, or adult, or vacuum, or whatever). This could be a room, a high perch, the basement, etc. A cat will feel much more secure knowing that she has a 'safe haven'. If a cat walks away or hides, make sure the child knows to leave the cat alone and not go after it.

As with any other pet, no matter how tolerant the cat is, never leave a small child unattended with a cat.