



Homeless Animal Rescue Team (HART) of Cincinnati

Why Kittens Should Be Adopted in Pairs

Kittens need interaction with other kittens for healthy social development. A kitten learns a lot in the first several months of life from its mother and littermates. Separating a kitten from its mother is often a necessity for adoption purposes, but taking it away from its littermates and isolating can delay the kitten's development emotionally, socially, and sometimes physically. Kittens who can remain with one of their littermates or a similarly aged companion tend to be healthier, happier, and better socialized pets than those who are isolated from others of their kind at an early age.

Even loving, caring, humans are not adequate substitutes for kitten companionship. Even if a person is fortunate enough to be home often, the amount of attention a lone kitten will demand could occupy more time than a person has available. A pair of kittens will still want to interact with people but can keep each other occupied. Most cats, regardless of their age, are highly sociable and are truly happier living with other cat companions. This in turn makes them better pets.

Kittens are curious and crave constant stimulation. Out of boredom, a single kitten will often entertain itself by chewing plants, climbing drapes, unrolling toilet paper, exploring electrical cords, etc. Kittens who live with other kittens may sometimes do these things as well, but if they have another kitten to tumble around and play with, it is less likely they'll need to entertain themselves with behaviors like these that can be destructive and dangerous.

Kittens bite and wrestle with one another – this is normal behavior. You can't prevent a kitten from doing what comes naturally. Though it's not acceptable for a kitten to bite and wrestle with its human companions, in the absence of having a companion its own age to play with, this is precisely what a single kitten will want to do. Even if you are willing to allow (and can tolerate) this behavior from your kitten, by the time the kitten matures, you will end up with an adult cat who has developed very bad habits (i.e., biting and scratching as "play").

Kittens are very active at night. A single kitten is likely to keep people awake at night with constant jumping, pouncing, and other "hunting" behavior. With a companion to play with at night, this behavior is minimized because they will have each other to chase and play games with until they fall asleep.

A single kitten is not a good companion for an older cat. Kittens have boundless energy. They want to play and run constantly which can overwhelm and irritate an older cat. Likewise, a kitten is apt to be frustrated that its companion doesn't have the same level of energy. At the very least, this can lead to two very unhappy cats. At worst, behavior problems such as litter box avoidance or destructive scratching can occur as one or both cats act out their frustrations on their surroundings. It's unlikely that the two will have a close, bonded relationship, even after the kitten matures, since their experiences with one another from the beginning of the relationship are likely to be negative. An older kitty is better matched with a cat closer to its own age and temperament.

HART requires young kittens be adopted in pairs unless you have a kitten or playful cat at home. This policy is not based on a desire to increase our number of adoptions. Rather this ensures the kittens we rescue and nurture are adopted into homes that offer the best environment for their social development.