



PREPARING YOUR CAT FOR A NEW BABY

Maintain A Consistent Schedule	<p>Before your baby arrives, decide on and start following a schedule for feeding and playing with your cat, cleaning its litter boxes, and performing other daily care. If possible, enlist family members to help minimize disruption to your cat's routine in a time of great change.</p> <p>Don't make the common mistake of giving extra attention to your cat before the baby's birth. Your cat will become use to the extra attention and won't understand why it lessens when your baby arrives.</p> <p>Identify activities that your cat enjoys and that you can provide even when busy with your new baby. Think ear rubs, play sessions, or treat time.</p> <p>Start introducing independent play options into your cat's day such as food puzzles, battery-operated toys, sensory boxes, and videos.</p>
Change Your Cat's Environment Gradually	<p>When preparing the baby's room, do so in small stages to allow your cat time to adjust.</p> <p>If you know you'll need to relocate any of your cat's resources (such as the litter box and the scratching post), do this slowly and ahead of time.</p> <p>Limit your cat's access to the baby's room by installing a stacked baby gate or closing the door. If your cat typically follows you around the house or sleeps in your room, gradually practice keeping them separated so they're used to it when your baby arrives.</p>
Include Your Cat in Setting Up of Your Baby's Space	<p>Allow your cat to explore your baby's room and investigate your baby supplies. Create a positive association for your cat by playing with it and doling out treats in the baby's room.</p> <p>Once your cat has checked out the room, cover the crib and changing table so that your cat doesn't claim them for its own sleeping areas. Teach your cat not to climb onto them or use a crib tent as a deterrent.</p>



WANT TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CAT?

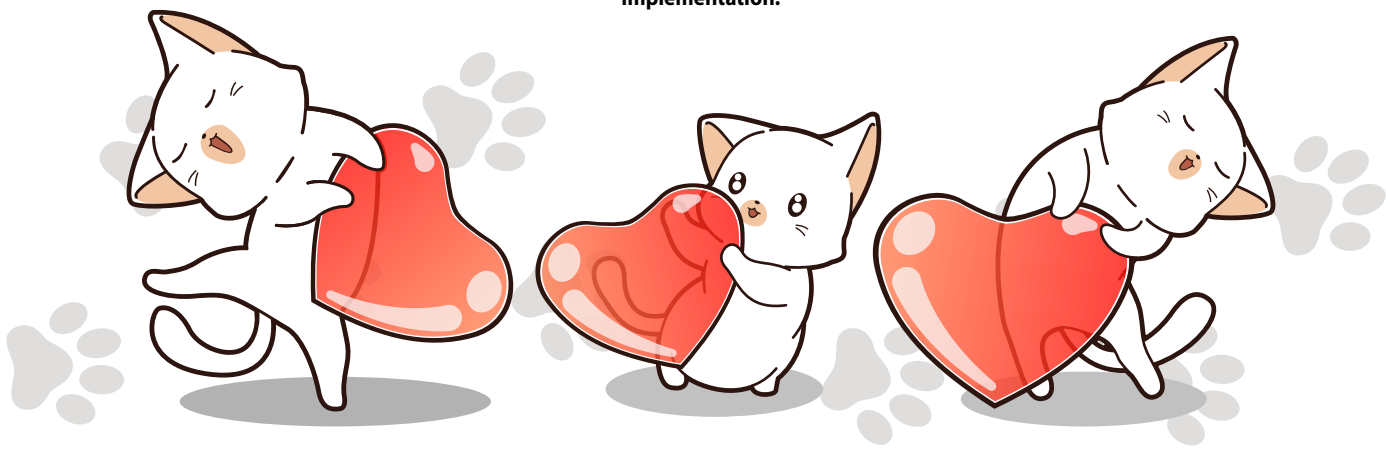
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Desensitize Your Cat to Baby Sounds and Smells	<p>Prepare your cat for the presence of your new baby by playing a CD of baby sounds or free audio clips from the internet during mealtimes, playtime, and snuggle time. Start by playing them at just audible and then, if your cat shows no interest, gradually increase the volume over a few weeks until it reaches a realistic level. In addition, periodically turn on musical baby toys and allow your cat to investigate them.</p> <p>Encourage your cat to rub on new furniture. This will mark your cat's scent on the furniture and give your cat less reason to mark with urine.</p> <p>Make a new baby item smell like part of your home by rubbing a cloth on your cat's cheeks (to pick up their pheromones) during a relaxed time and then rub this cloth on the new item.</p> <p>Begin to associate the smell of baby detergent, lotions, powders, and other products with treats. This will form a positive association to your baby from the start.</p> <p>While your baby is at the hospital, have a family member bring home an item of clothing or a blanket that carries your baby's scent. Allow your cat to smell the blanket so that your baby will seem less foreign when you bring her home.</p>
Take Care of Issues Before Your Baby Arrives	<p>Before your baby arrives, make sure your home is optimally set up for your cat. The biggest things to consider are litter box setup, resting areas, and escape routes. A cat that could tolerate an imperfect home environment may react to the stress of a stranger in the home by developing behavior issues.</p> <p>If you have never trained your cat, now might be the time to teach the basics of obedience. Once your cat can perform the basics, practice them while doing soon-to-be routine baby tasks. For example, practice a sit while walking around with a doll.</p>

Disclaimer: This checklist is intended to serve only as a starting point. A cat with inappropriate behavior should always see a vet for a health check. If your cat receives a clean bill of health, please consider contacting a cat behavior consultant. Many behavior modification techniques have detrimental effects if misapplied. A qualified professional will take a complete behavior history, develop an intervention plan customized for your cat, and guide you through its implementation.



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