Baby Kittens

from Found to Adopted

Baby kittens need our help! In spring and all summer long, shelters in many communities are flooded with tiny baby kittens. Well-meaning people find kittens outside and bring them to shelters, thinking that's the best thing to do. Sometimes it is! Very often though, there are better options. Many shelters do not have the resources to care for underage kittens. Most shelters have limited resources, and may be forced to euthanize newborn kittens right away. The good news for abandoned baby kittens is there is often an alternative to overwhelmed shelters, and it could be **you**!

Three articles to help if you find kittens:

1. What to do when you find kittens
2. Baby kitten care guide
3. How to find kittens new homes

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When you find kittens…

The first thing you can do if you find baby kittens outside is to **assess** the situation. Do not immediately scoop them up, unless they are in immediate danger or suffering. Danger for kittens could be weather (below 65 or above 85 degrees, rain, snow), cars, dogs, or wildlife. Suffering could be sick or injured, or a single crying kitten.

Why not pick up kittens right away? You don't want to steal a mom cat's babies!

Many baby kittens you find outdoors are being well-cared for by a "community" or "feral" mom cat. Community or feral cats are often in a "colony" of cats, fed and cared for by one or more caretakers. Responsible caretakers do their best to make sure all the cats in their colony are spayed and neutered so they can't make more kittens. However, sometimes a newcomer joins a colony and has babies before they can be trapped, neutered/spayed, and released (TNR). Or sometimes there are caretakers who don't realize or haven't been able to get the cats fixed.

If you find baby kittens, Mom cat might be out looking for food, or moving her kittens to a new nest. If kittens are in a relatively safe place and not injured or sick, ideally you will assess and do a '**kitten stakeout**' to see if mom comes back. You may need to wait a couple of hours. As long as the kittens are warm enough, healthy kittens can survive a couple of hours without food. Stay as far away as you can while still keeping an eye on where the kittens are located. If you are too close, some experts say closer than 35 feet, mom cat might wait for you to move away before she returns.

If mom cat returns...
If mom returns, you can celebrate! If she moves the kittens to a new nest, you may not see her again. If she has made a nest on your property, you can set up a temporary mom cat shelter or just feed her until the kittens are 5 weeks old. Here's a great photo chart [link] to help you determine a kitten's age. At about 4 to 5 weeks you'll see the kittens also eating the food you are leaving out for the family.

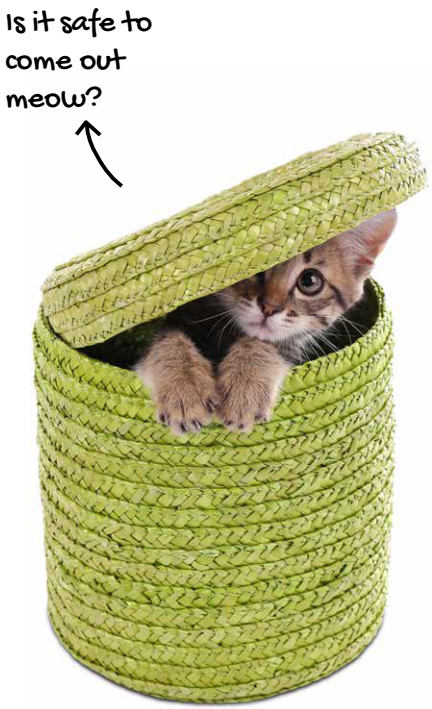
If mom cat doesn't return…
If mom cat doesn't return, or it's dangerous to leave the kittens to see if she does, you'll need to capture and safely contain the kittens. Average kitten litter size is 2 to 6 kittens, but occasionally there are more. Be sure to return to the spot at least twice after a few hours to make sure you didn't miss a kitten!

Finding a kitten foster...
When you have the kittens safely contained, call or visit your local animal control shelter to ask what any local laws may be regarding reporting found kittens. When you speak to them, you can ask the shelter if they have a foster program and can easily take the kittens in, or if they know of a rescue that can. If a shelter or rescue has the room and resources, you can offer to foster for them or ask them to take in the kittens.

However, you may be the kittens only hope! In many communities, shelters and rescues may not have the resources to care for kittens that are not big enough to be fixed and adopted - that's usually when they weigh 2 pounds, at around 8 weeks old. Or maybe they can only take them after they are eating on their own and don't need overnight care, when they are about 4 to 5 weeks old.

Good news: You don't need much space or experience to care for baby kittens.

Baby kitten care guide



You're going to be a kitten foster parent, congratulations! You are a hero!!

If you found kittens, be sure to read our "What to do when you find kittens" first. Caring for underage kittens is a selfless act that saves kitten lives. Kittens without their mom cat will not survive without a human like you!

Learning proper care can be the difference between life and death for fragile tiny kittens! Simple things like what to feed, how much and how often to feed, and how warm to keep kittens is critical.

While you're reading these articles and watching the videos below, put the kittens in a safe place inside your home, closed away from other pets and children. One idea is to use a plastic storage bin with a folded sheet to pad and line the bottom, as towels can get snagged on tiny kitten nails. Make sure the room they are in is the right temperature for the age of kitten.

Figure out the age of your kittens: https://www.alleycat.org/resources/kitten-progression/ and http://www.kittenlady.org/age have photos to help you! The 2nd link also has the oh-so-important environment temperature.

Now your kittens are safe and warm, so can take a half hour or more to educate yourself so you can properly feed and care for your kittens! Next are some of our favorite resources to help you care for baby kittens at any age, from one day old to several months old.

http://www.kittenlady.org/kitten-care - great how-to videos for bottle babies

http://kittenrescue.org/tag/bottle-babies/ - helpful how-to articles

From our friends Maddie's Fund…
https://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm

Supply list:
https://www.maddiesfund.org/assets/documents/Institute/casorphanedkittenbabybagbrochure1521148752691.pdf

UC Davis Guide to Raising Underage Kittens
https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/guidebooks/guide-to-raising-unweaned-underage-kittens

If you've read and watched all that, now you're on your way to being a kitten foster superstar! Once your kittens are healthy and two pounds, you can get them spayed and neutered and find them new homes. Rehome is here to help you with that! Read on…

How to

find kittens new homes

If you found kittens, followed your local laws, and fostered them until they are ready to be adopted, you are a kitten hero! We are here to help you find your fostered kittens new homes.

First, get the kittens spayed and neutered. A female kitten can get pregnant when she is just 4 MONTHS old, having kittens when she is just 6 months old herself! Most vets will neuter boys at 2 months old and girls from 2-3 months old, as long as they weigh at least 2 pounds. If you need help finding low-cost or free spay neuter, ask your local shelter or rescue for referrals.

First you can ask your friends and family if they want to adopt one or two of your kittens. Two kittens together will be much fun for their adopters, and they will keep each other company too. Be sure any adopter understands the time and care kittens and cats need, and that they are ready for up to a 20-year commitment.

If your friends and family aren't able to adopt all your fostered kittens, you can make a profile for each kitten on Rehome. Rehome is a free program that allows you to post your kittens on Adopt-a-Pet.com for adopters near you to see and apply to adopt them.

Signing up for Rehome is easy, and Rehome is free for you to use. All you need to get started are photos of your kittens, some basic health and behavior information, and a bio that describes each kitten's personality. Once you've saved your kitten's profile, it will be reviewed and published. You can then begin to get applications from potential new families.

Kitten Rehome Listing Tips

* **Take 4 great photos of each kitten.** Pro tips:

1. Use a solid color background, light for dark kittens, bright color for lighter-color kittens. You can drape a bed sheet over the kitten bed, then be ready to take photos of them in their bed just as they are waking up! Or use a bed sheet on the floor of a brightly lit room.

2. Bright indirect daylight is best.

3. Stand with the light source (window) behind you, so kitten is illuminated.

4. Dangle a toy and move it up near your camera to get kitten to look into the camera.

5. You may need to take 50 photos to get 4 good ones.

6. Try taking photos just as kittens are waking up, so their eyes are open

* **Check your email** frequently to respond to questions and applications promptly.
* **Follow** the application screening tips to find your kittens safe, loving homes.

Get started: list your kittens at www.Rehome.AdoptaPet.com

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