

Owning a cat can be a wonderful experience for all family members, especially children. Cats can enhance a child's self-esteem, teach them responsibility and help them learn empathy. Despite this, children and cats may not always automatically get along. Parents must be willing to teach both the cat and their children acceptable behaviors and limits.

### **Below are some tips to help you and your child gain your new cat's trust:**

**Holding:** Have your child sit down when they hold the cat. Many cats don't enjoy being held, but will sit next to you and your child, especially if you offer them treats. If you sit with the child in your lap, you can ensure that your child is gentle and doesn't get hurt.

**Petting:** Petting is a great way for your child and cat to become friends. Make sure your child knows to be gentle and let the cat leave when it wants to.

**Treats:** Having your child give your cat a treat is another great way for your cat to become comfortable with your child. Have your child give treats in an open palm, rather than holding it in their fingers.

**Play:** Teach your child to play with your cat with toys instead of hands. This will create a positive and safe relationship between the two.

**Training:** Training can create a strong bond between your cat and the family.

**Safe Spaces:** Have places where your cat can take breaks from your child. Never allow your child to chase or harrass the cat.

### **Cats and Babies**

It may take time for your cat to become comfortable with your child and to learn what behaviors are appropriate. Young cats will want to play, but will need to be taught to be gentle around a baby. Punishing your cat will often make matters worse. Your cat can begin to associate punishment with being around children, which will make them more defensive around your child. If your cat is growling, hissing, or biting at your child, you should seek the help of someone at the Allen County SPCA or another feline specialist to help change the behavior and protect your child.

