

## Before the Arrival

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When you've made the decision to adopt and bring home a Siberian kitten, it's like bringing home a "human baby" – and that's is just how I want you to think! There's lots of changes to be made, arrangements to be done, things to buy. Kittens and babies are a lot alike. There's no built-in gene or natural instinct in either of them to alert them to the dangers of chewing and playing with wires, or the Lysol or Clorox bottle that they may knock over under the sink and then drink from it. You need to get down on your hands and knees and look at the world from their perspective. Look for a comfy spot on your floor to sit for a while and go on reading this info. Make notes right on here for yourself or for later too!

**FIRST, your kitten should be confined to a family members' bedroom** until it gets a little familiar with its' new family and home. At night or when no one is home, this should be their "safe place" for about a month. Keep it out of drafts, cool, damp places. They should be in a warm, comfy bedroom with easy access to their food, water, toys, bed and a litter box. Kitten proof the room **EXTREMELY** well. This bedroom will also help socialize them to you and make them feel safe, secure and loved. When you are home, let the kitten explore other areas especially when and where the family spends a lot of time together. Don't forget, this kitten was just taken from its mother and siblings, so **YOU** and your family are now its new mother and siblings. They will look to you for everything and depend 100% on you.

**GRAB A PEN and a notebook.** Sit down on the floor and look at everything around you on their eye level. Look at **EACH** item, piece of furniture, each wall, every side of the room, until you've studied every square inch. Take it section by section and think about **EVERY** item or area and ask yourself these questions: What could they do with that? How could they hurt themselves with that? Is that piece or shelf secure enough? Could they break that, get cut, hurt or injure themselves? You wouldn't leave wrapped candy in a low dish on a coffee table for a toddler to grab and possibly choke on, right? You wouldn't leave a fragile piece of glassware that's within reach either that they could grab, break or knock over, right? Well, the same goes for a baby kitten. You always have to think what is there that they can get into or climb on. If they climb on something, think, where does that lead to? This is where kittens have the advantage over babies. So, sit down for a while, take a look around you. Look under the sofa, bed, chair, furniture. Ask yourself **ALL OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS** and write down what needs to be changed to be safe, and what needs to be put away or secured. Make notes. If you think toddlers are fast, well kittens are quieter and quicker! I actually had a cat capable of opening up a drawer for Halls menthol cough drops all the time!

After going through and fixing the areas of concern in your house, next is to **THINK ABOUT A VETERINARIAN**. Actually, think of two. Do not wait on this and get two beforehand. Ask friends, neighbors, co-workers who they use and feel good about. You can even call them and ask some questions like how long they have been a vet, where they went to school, years in practice, how many days a week they're open, hours, and if **THEY OWN THEIR OWN BUSINESS OR OWNED BY A LARGER CORPORATION**. Ask about the experience of the staff. Are they licensed vet techs? What about after-hours medical emergencies? Are they easy for you and others to get to? Do they return calls? Who is on call when they're not in? Where is the largest pet clinic to you? What about overnight kenneling, or overnight medical attention – are they staffed? After getting answers to most of these questions, do you feel comfortable with them, and would you trust them with the care of your pet? **ALWAYS** have a second vet lined up just in case you can't get to or reach your regular vet. They could

be sick, on vacation, or a storm has blocked roads. When you've decided on a vet, introduce yourself and let them know that you will be using their services. **PUT THEIR NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER ON THE REFRIGERATOR!** Or where ever you keep emergency numbers. Make sure that all family members and sitters know where it is, and know the physical location and how to get there. You may want to drive there yourself with your family just to make sure everyone knows the way there.

While you're walking around your home, get in the habit of glancing down, and looking around your feet. Kittens follow you closely and are curious when you're opening doors to closets, cabinets or the front door. Make sure cabinets in the bath and kitchen close securely. **ALWAYS** look down when you are entering or leaving your home. They are quick and can get out easily.

**STRINGS, FRINGE, WIRES, RUBBER BANDS**, dental floss, hair ties, plastic bags, threads, knitting yarns, phone cords, computer cords. These are all things that are very exciting to babies...and kittens. Kittens chew, teethe and swallow just like babies. **BITTER APPLE** spray you can buy at PetSmart or even WalMart in the dog department works very well to spray all your cords, wires and plugs, or anything else they may find to chew. Soak the items or wires with it, let dry. You may need to do it every couple of weeks. You can also use vinegar, or make a hot pepper wash or spray. Other things to think about: **NEVER, EVER LEAVE OUT FISHING POLES WITH LINE ON IT OR ANY FISHING TACKLE!** They love to chew fishing line and it would be very easy for them to "hook" themselves on the tackle. If you're cooking in the kitchen, they may want to jump up and take a peek. If you have pilot lights on your stovetop, think about covers. **NEVER LEAVE KNIVES OUT on the table, counter or in the drain board.** It takes a split second for them to jump up and cut themselves. Wash and put them away immediately. Some houseplants are also very toxic, so research what you have or remove. Keep toilet seats down too – they can fall in and drown if they can't get out!

Although I am against caging animals, a small kennel cage might be a good and safe investment. You may want to think about this for the near future. One that can fit a small litter pan in it, bowl of water and food, couple of toys, towel, bed, or something to lay on, and room to stand, and move around a bit. They come in very handy for training or if you need to confine them or keep them safe for some reason. You may need one if you have other animals in your home that are a bit bigger, or more aggressive at first with a new kitten. If you're cooking dinner and unable to watch your kitten, it could be a handy item. If you need to take your kitten to the vet in an hour or so, you can put them in it to relax and calm down, and know where they are when it's time to go. They're good too when there are strangers in your home, or work being done on your home, a party or get-together going on with the doors always being opened. If you're doing heavy cleaning with floor chemicals or shampooing carpeting they will come in handy and keep your cat or kitten safe until everything is done and dry. Kennels or crates are good for traveling also if you have room in your vehicle, like if you have a summer or second home. Your cat or kitten won't be cramped in a small carrier. To quiet them down, you can cover the crate with a thin blanket or sheet. It may run you about 50 dollars, but might be worth the investment to ensure you're keeping your pet safe. Assess your needs for your lifestyle and your family. The other thing is a good pet carrier. Don't get the cheapest or the smallest. Your kitten will grow. You'll need this for vet trips. Make sure it's secure.

**FOODS – dry and canned.** I feed my cats and kittens mostly **Purina ONE dry food** in the teal-colored bag. It's a higher quality food and easily accessible. Blue Buffalo, Iams, Nutrish, Eukanuba, Wellness, are all higher quality foods. Do **NOT** change their foods, or keep trying all different kinds. Leave them on the **Purina ONE** for about 10 to 12 months before changing foods. This is a great way to upset the digestive tract when they are very young and can cause them to have diarrhea for weeks and get dehydrated. When they are older, like a year or so, you can get them used to **TWO** different types of dry foods, just in case your store runs out of one, they are used to another. **DRY FOOD IS LEFT OUT FOR THEM 24/7.** I give them canned food in the mornings for variety in the diet and it helps to add in water in the diet. **(ABSOLUTELY NO POUCH FOODS!!)** One small can of Fancy Feast, Purina, Blue

Buffalo is plenty for an adult cat. Add a teaspoon of water to it. Kittens should get a can in the **AM** and a can in the **PM** for about a couple of months after bringing them home. Add a teaspoon of water each time to it. Keep them on a regular feeding schedule. Special treats are alright as they get older. Treats I give are **ALL** cooked with **NO HERBS OR SPICES**, given at room temperature. Chicken, salmon, shrimp, steak, prime rib. No deep-fried foods. I will pan fry steak, everything else is poached, or baked. Cut into small enough pieces for them to eat. Remember, these are treats – not every night meals. **WATCH WHERE YOU PUT YOUR FOODS OR SNACKS.** Some things that we eat, are deadly to cats. Chocolate for one, alcohol, grapes, raisins, onions, sugary snacks, jelly beans. If in doubt, or you think they've eaten some **CALL YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY!**

**Think of “DESIGNATED” places for your kitten.** Where is that “quiet” corner they may like? Wherever you pick, they will change that. They will let you know where their bed should be. A simple, rolled edge dog bed, or crate liner is fine for now. It can fit easily under furniture, and easy to wash. Look in WalMart dogs section. Make sure food, water, and litter box are nearby and easily accessible to both your pet and for you to clean on a daily basis. You may also need to “watch” your kitten “go” at times for stool samples for the vet, or when they are not feeling well. So, keep within your eye sight for a while where you can see it, but where they feel they have a little privacy too. The litter box should be size appropriate for your cat. Not too high, but high enough. You may need different sizes as they grow. Keep it simple – no covers, self-cleaning contraptions, and **ABSOLUTLEY NO PLASTIC LINERS – kittens love to chew plastic bags!** Figure out where to keep the scooper, plastic bag or garbage pail for waste, extra litter. I use a little lidded bath garbage pail with a plastic bag in it kept in the cabinet under the sink. Keep it accessible to be able to scoop the litter on a daily basis.

**WHAT ABOUT BOWLS?** I find metal the best. Plastic is not good. It can retain odors, and can cause cat acne. Glass or ceramic can break too easily and they can get injured. I do not use the type where there are two bowls joined together. The only time to use plastic is either while traveling or in a kennel or crate, unless you get the metal type of bowls with a rubberized or non-skid bottom. Cats and kittens like low, wider bowls about 6” in diameter – about the length of a dollar bill. 2 of these are good for dry food and water. A smaller 4” bowl or dish is good for can food. For the 6” bowls, look in the dog department at WalMart. What they sell for cats or kittens really isn't good and too small if you work all day. Keep a few sizes around or a few extra for when you plan on going away for the day or will be late, etc., so you can put out extra food and water. If you work all day, it's a good idea to leave out 2 bowls of food and water just in case one gets tipped over, or if you know a storm is coming and you might loose power, or it will be very hot that day. If you have a big house with more than one floor, put food, water and litter box on each floor. After they are about a year old, you can cut it back to just one floor. Siberians **LOVE** to play in the water bowl, and it's not unusual for them to put their toys in it. If you do get detained, like a storm or something pops up after work, it's a good idea to have a neighbor or friend stop in to check on your kitten or cat and to check the food and water. Besides giving them fresh food and water in the morning, it's a good idea to do it in the evening too. Whatever you do or are doing during the course of your days, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS make sure they have fresh water accessible to them.**

#### YOUR LIST SO FAR:

First, go through the house, re-arrange things, look for hazards and take care of, check all wires and spray them.

Cat carrier (fleece for bottom)	possible kennel or crate	4 – 6” metal bowls
2 or 3 - 4” bowls – for can food	bitter apple spray, or pepper	2 or 3 spray bottles (1 plain
Rolled edge bed (dog section)	flea comb	combs, wire brush (dog)
Litter boxes – medium, open	litter – unscented (open and smell)	litter scooper
Toys – remove strings, feathers	various balls – toys	upright scratching post

**The scratching/claw post.** This is like their “trophy” or “prize” and needs to be in everybody’s sight. They are proud of shredding it and needs to be in the open. Siberians can become a good size, so get one tall or long enough for them to stretch out with it. It may take a little time and coaxing for them to use it and not the sofa. Rub some catnip up and down on it, then put them there. Use a spray bottle with water and spray them when they are using the sofa.

**Toys – the fun stuff!** Look for toys that can not come apart easily, or be chewed apart with little eyes, or bells, which can be swallowed. Don’t buy with little strips or strings, or stretch elastics on them. They can be chewed off and swallowed when you’re not home. **NEVER BUY A TOY WITH FEATHERS!** If you do, either cut them off, or use the toy when you are home, and under supervision. Over the years, I’ve heard of many customers who have seen cats chew them off, swallow them, and the quill gets stuck or punctures the throat. Trip to the vet. **NEVER** use just a “string” as a toy to play with them. They can swallow it, and it will twist their gut and they can die from this, or another expensive vet trip. If you do buy toys with strings, feathers, bells, cut them off when you get home, or only play with your pet with these when you are home supervising, then take them away, and lock them up, or put them in a safe, inaccessible place. Soft balls, some soft catnip toys are good. An old sock with catnip in it, just a plain cardboard box is fun for them, as long as one end is cut open. This will entertain them for hours. Check toys regularly for them coming apart, fraying, threads, etc., and throw them out.

**How do you train your kitten or cat?** Once home with your new kitten, decide on a name that appeals to all in the family and suits the character of your kitten. **NEVER associate, or use in the same command the word “NO” with your kittens’ name.** Just use the word **NO** in a firm, stern way directed at them. You don’t want them to associate their name with a bad act, or misbehavior – then they will never come when you use their name. This way, they will associate their name with good behavior and will not be afraid to come when called.

A spray bottle of water is great for training. Be sure the bottle is thoroughly cleaned out, or go to WalMart and buy brand new ones (look in the cosmetic sections for small ones). A quick spray or stream of water works well when caught in a bad act. Keep one, two, or three handy. A single sheet or two of newspaper rolled up, one end tapped where you would hold it, is effective too. The “crack” of the noise it makes when hitting a dresser or on the side of your leg, or the countertop, with the word **“NO”** said very firmly works fairly well. Just be consistent with the way you, and everyone in the family trains your cat or kitten. **NEVER, EVER** raise your hand to hit or strike your kitten or cat! This is unacceptable and uncalled for. If you and everyone are persistent and consistent with the training, you should have no problems. Siberians are highly intelligent and train easily.

I may have not thought of everything. But this is a good start for you. Every house and home is different with the needs of a kitten or cat. Be sure to include all family members with input, what they think is needed, what needs to be changed, and in decisions. They may have good ideas on what needs to be done, where certain things should go. Just like bringing in a new baby into the home, everybody gets involved and helps out with the joyous occasion. Let children have a little say on choosing the bedding or the bowls. Designate a little responsibility to all members in the family to ensure a good routine. You can even try rotating the responsibilities so everybody learns and takes turns. And lastly, hugs and kisses on a daily basis, morning and night is a must by all!

**Now, sit down, look around and start your list of things to change, move and buy.**

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