

Playing with your kitten

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Kittens should be encouraged to play every day. Here are some ideas for toys and games to keep them – and you – occupied.

- Provide toys and activities that allow the kitten to use its senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.
- Toys that encourage the kitten to chase, run, stalk and pounce should always be on the end of poles and dangle freely to avoid inflicting damage on owners.
- Foraging devices that allow exploratory activity, simulate normal predatory behaviours and stimulate the senses are important.
- Hiding dry food in different places around the house and letting the kitten 'hunt' for dinner provides excellent mental as well as physical exercise.
- An indoor garden filled with grass, catnip or catmint can provide sensory stimulation as well as tactile stimulation.
- Toys should be rotated regularly, even daily, to maintain interest. Although it may appear that a cat loses interest in a toy, representation of the toy 5 minutes later may result in the resumption of play.
- For safety, toys need to be checked regularly for loose parts and damage.
- Simple toys such as hair scrunchies, paper bags and cardboard boxes can keep many kittens occupied and happy for hours.
- Games should never involve the use of human body parts (hands, fingers, toes).
- Cats often appear to prefer vertical space to horizontal space. For many cats this may mean providing more places to climb on to rather than lots of room to run around.