



Cat Toys and How to Use Them

How to pick the right toy

There are many factors that contribute to whether a toy is safe or dangerous: your cat's size, activity level, and personal preference. Also consider the environment in which your cat spends her time. Although we can't guarantee your cat's enthusiasm or her safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines.

Be cautious

The things that are usually the most attractive to cats are often the very things that are the most dangerous. Cat-proof your home by checking for string, ribbons, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins, needles, and anything else that could be ingested. All of these items are dangerous, no matter how cute your cat may look when they play with them.

Soft toys should be machine washable. Check labels for child safety - a stuffed toy that's labeled as appropriate for children less than three years old doesn't contain dangerous fillings. Dangerous fillings include things like nutshells and polystyrene beads. Rigid toys are often not as attractive to cats.

Recommended toys

Active toys:

- Round plastic shower curtain rings are fun as a single ring to bat around, hide or carry, or when linked together and hung in an enticing spot.
- Plastic rolling balls, with or without bells inside.
- Ping-Pong balls and plastic practice golf balls with holes to help cats carry them. Try putting one in a dry bathtub, as a captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa or refrigerator.
- Paper bags (with handles removed!) are good for pouncing, hiding and interactive play. Do not use plastic bags! Many cats like to chew and ingest the plastic.
- Empty cardboard rolls from toilet paper and paper towels are ideal cat toys, especially if you unwind a little bit of the cardboard to get them started.

Catnip:

- Catnip-filled soft toys are fun to kick, carry, and rub.
- Plain catnip can be crushed and sprinkled on a scratch-post or on a towel placed on the floor.

- Not all cats are attracted to catnip. Some cats may become over-stimulated to the point of aggressive play and others may be slightly sedated. Kittens don't typically start to react to catnip until they are around 3-6 months of age.
- Catnip is not addictive and is perfectly safe for cats to roll in, rub in, or eat.

Comfort toys:

- Stuffed animal should be small enough to carry. Toys with legs and a tail may be even more attractive to cats.
- Cardboard boxes, especially ones that are a tiny bit too small for your cat to really fit into, can be great toys for cats as well.

Get the most out of your cat's toys!

- Rotate your cat's toys weekly by making only four or five toys available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your cat has a favorite, like a soft "baby" that she loves to cuddle with, you can leave that one out all the time.
- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses – one toy to carry, one to "kill", one to roll, and one to "baby".
- "Hide and Seek" is a fun game for cats to play. Found toys are often much more attractive than a toy that is blatantly introduced.

