



**Playing with your cat isn't just about fun—it's a key part of their well-being! If your feline friend is meowing, rubbing against you, bringing toys or knocking things off shelves, it might be time for a play session. Here's how to make the most of playtime and keep your cat happy and healthy.**

### The Importance of Play

Playtime offers so much more than just entertainment. It's an essential part of your cat's routine, providing:

- **Mental Stimulation:** Play helps satisfy your cat's natural instincts by providing an appropriate outlet for predatory behaviours.
- **Physical Exercise:** Activities like pouncing and chasing promote a healthy weight and muscle tone.
- **Bonding Time:** Engaging in play strengthens your relationship with your feline friend.

### What makes for good play?

Play is most beneficial when it incorporates the following:

- **Foraging and Hunting:** Use toys and activities that encourage your cat to "hunt" and capture their prey. Mimicking different kinds of prey, like birds, mice or bugs can meet your cat's needs to engage in different hunting styles and make play even more satisfying.
- **Variety:** Introduce a mix of toys and play styles to keep things interesting and prevent boredom.

We suggest having at least two play sessions a day, each lasting 10-15 minutes. For younger or more energetic cats, they may need more frequent playtimes.

*Tip: Use toys instead of your hands or feet to prevent accidental scratches and teach your cat to play safely.*

### How to Make Play Exciting

Keep playtime engaging with these tips:

- **Try Different Toys:** Experiment with various toys, from wands and feathers to crinkle balls and jingle toys. Each cat can have unique preferences, so it's worth trying a few options.
- **Tease and Tempt:** Start by showing your cat the toy from a distance to pique their curiosity. Hide the toy around corners, under blankets and occasionally peek out so your cat can see it.
- **Mimic Prey:** Make the toy act like prey by moving it away from your cat, changing direction and speed, occasionally holding it still and letting the toy "hide" to keep the chase exciting.
- **Let Them Catch It:** When your cat captures the toy, let them enjoy it! Allow them to bat it around and explore it with their paws and mouth.
- **Slow Down Gradually:** Wind down the play session by slowing the toy's movement and letting your cat catch it more often. Abruptly ending play can be frustrating.

*Tip: Tossing kibble or treats down a hallway can simulate a hunting experience, encouraging your cat to search and play.*

### Laser Pointers: To Use or Not to Use?

We do not recommend laser pointers for play. While they can be engaging, there are potential risks:



# Cat Behaviour Guide

## Playing With Your Cat



- **Safety Concerns:** Lasers can harm your cat's eyes if pointed directly at them and may cause them to run into obstacles or jump unsafely.
- **Light Chasing:** Cats may become frustrated or obsessed with the laser, leading to stress or behavioral issues such as looking for the light outside of playtime.

If you choose to use a laser pointer, ensure that your cat gets to "catch" something tangible afterward by shining the light onto a toy or treat to satisfy their hunting instinct.

### Catnip Tips

Catnip can add excitement to toys and playtime by engaging one of your cat's most powerful senses—their nose:

- **Encourage Interaction:** Use catnip to make toys or scratching posts more enticing. It can be applied in various forms such as sprays, powders or sticks.
- **Experiment:** Some cats love catnip, and may also like silver vine, honeysuckle or valerian. Young kittens and some adult cats might not respond to catnip, so you may want to explore different options.

Ways to Use Catnip:

- **Stuffed Toys:** Place catnip inside soft toys.
- **Sprinkling:** Dust catnip on scratching posts or in snuffle mats.
- **Rolling:** Coat toys with catnip to increase interest.

*Tip: Some cats may react to catnip by relaxing, but some may become more excited and playful. If you notice your cat is becoming too hyper, keep your hands safe by directing them to a toy.*

By incorporating these tips, you'll ensure your cat's playtime is fun, engaging and beneficial for their overall well-being. Enjoy the bonding time and the joy of seeing your feline friend happy and active!

### Additional Resources

For more tips on enriching your cat's playtime, check out these resources:

- [Interactive Cat Play infographic](#) by Dr. Mikel Delgado and Lili Chin
- Fear Free [Article](#) on Cat Play the Right Way: 7 Mistakes to Avoid
- Book: Play With Your Cat! by Dr. Mikel Maria Delgado

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behavioural questions by emailing:  
[askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com](mailto:askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com)

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).