

Playing Safely with Your Kitten

Learning to play safely with your kitten entails paying close attention to what you are doing as a kitten parent. Cats have a tendency to be full of energy one minute and napping the next. Think of the term “catnap.” We use this to describe a short and quick nap. The reason it is called catnap is because cats do this repeatedly throughout the day.

When your new kitten has overcome her initial fear of being in her new home, it is important for you to understand that she will start displaying her curiosity through **energetic exploring**. To help her display this energy in a positive way, **you need to play with her**. *It is your job* to help her get her mental and physical exercise needs met.

Kittens basically have two modes of play: **predatory** and **locomotive**. Predatory play includes behaviours such as pouncing, grabbing, chasing, and throwing things in the air. Locomotive play includes behaviours such as running, climbing, leaping, and finding places the kitten can go into and come out of quickly, such as a paper bag or a box.

To play safely with your kitten, give her toys that stimulate both modes of play. For predatory play, balls, fake mice (especially those that make noise), and laser pointers are excellent suggestions. Keep in mind, however, that *you do not want to get any objects small enough that your kitten can swallow them*. Objects with feathers, although fun for your cat, will end up in pieces around your house. Kittens enjoy tinsel toys too, but they should be offered only during supervised playtime.

For locomotive play, one suggestion is to get a cat climber. These come in many different sizes and types. They can be used not only as a place to climb and run through but also as a **scratching post** or a place to sleep. You can also have a cat tree for your kitten to climb on, scratch, and lay down on so she can oversee her territory.

Social play is great for your kitten, too. However, **never use your feet or hands as play objects with a cat**. Your kitten cannot tell the difference between your appendages and his toy mouse if both are being presented as toys! Social play is interaction between your kitten and people or other animals within the household. This type of play is important not only for getting along with the family members, but also if you want your kitten to be comfortable around guests in your house.

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If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us

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