

Safe and Fun Cat Toys

There are many factors that contribute to the safety or danger of a toy. Many of those factors; however, are completely dependent upon your cat's size, activity level, and personal preference. Another factor to be considered is the environment in which your cat spends her time. Although we cannot guarantee your cat's enthusiasm or her safety with a specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines.

Some cautions

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, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins, needles, and anything else that could be ingested. These items are dangerous, no matter how cute your cat may look when she's playing with them. Avoid or alter toys that aren't "cat-proof" by removing ribbons, feathers, strings, eyes, or other small parts that could be chewed and/or ingested.

Soft toys should be machine washable. Check labels for child safety, such as a stuffed toy that's labeled as safe for children under three years old. Make sure the toy doesn't contain dangerous fillings. Problem fillings include things like nutshells and polystyrene beads.

Recommended Toys

- Round plastic shower curtain rings are fun either 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 are great fun for cats if used in a dry bathtub. A captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa. You'll probably want to remove the balls from the bathtub before bedtime, unless you can't hear the action from your bedroom. Two o'clock in the morning seems to be a prime time for this game.
- Plastic practice golf balls can be fun for cats because they have holes which help cats carry them.
- Paper bags, with handles removed, are good for pouncing, hiding, and interactive play. They're also a great distraction if you need your cat to pay less attention to what you're trying to accomplish. Plastic bags are **not** a good idea, as many cats like to chew and ingest the plastic and they could pose a suffocation risk.
- Most cats enjoy playing in and around cardboard boxes.
- Cats are generally very drawn to play with wand toys (like Neko Flies, Kittycada, Kragonfly, etc.)
- Sisal-wrapped toys are very attractive to cats that tend to ignore soft toys.
- Empty cardboard rolls from toilet paper and paper towels are ideal cat toys, especially if you "unwind" a little cardboard to get them started.

Comfort Toys

- Soft stuffed animals are good for several purposes. For some cats, the stuffed animal should be small enough to carry around. For cats that want to "kill" the toy, the stuffed animal should be about the same size as the cat. Toys with legs and a tail seem to be even more attractive.
- Tunnels (place a Ping-Pong ball inside) are not only fun to play and hide in but can also be a safe and cozy spot for a cat to rest or nap.

Catnip

- Catnip is not addictive and is perfectly safe for cats to roll in, rub in or eat.
- Catnip-filled soft toys are fun to kick, carry and rub.
- Plain catnip can be crushed and sprinkled on the carpet, or on a towel placed on the floor. The catnip oils will stay in the carpet, and although they're not visible to us, your cat will still be able to smell them.
- Catnip sprays rarely have enough power to be attractive to cats.
- Not all cats are attracted to catnip; however, some cats may become over-stimulated to the point of aggressive play and some may become slightly sedated. Kittens under six months old seem to be immune to catnip.

Get the most out of 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 huge favorite, like a soft "baby" that she loves to cuddle with, you should probably leave that one out all the time.
- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses: at least 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 which is blatantly introduced.
- Remember to interactively play with your cat daily!

Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.