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# Cat Play and Toys

Cat play and toys incorporates predatory games of "play aggression". These activities allow kittens and younger cats to grow and acquire cognitive and motor skills, and to socialize with other cats. Cat play behavior can be either solitary (with toys or other objects) or social (with animals and people).[1]

## Nature of play[]

Since cats are meat-eating predators, nearly all cat games are predatory games.[2]

Prey is fearful of predators. Predators often encounter prey that attempt to escape predation. Prey that moves towards the cat with confidence may be exhibiting an aggressive defensive posture. Cats often play with toys that behave more like fearful prey trying to escape than toys that mimic a more confrontational prey.

Most cat games mimic a specific type of hunting;[3] for example, balls, fingers, sticks, and laser pointers emulate insects, while rope or string may emulate a snake.

Success rate is important in play. A cat that catches its prey every time soon gets bored, and a cat that never gets it just loses interest. Capturing prey at this rate generally maximizes a cat's interest in the game.

Play is about predation, and a highly excited cat can cause minor injuries in the excitement of the moment. With most cats, it is wise to keep playthings at least 20 cm (8") away from fingers or eyes. If playing with the bare hands, a cat will generally resist using its claws or biting too hard, but a cat that becomes extremely excited may accidentally inflict injuries to its human playmate in the form of light scratches of small puncture wounds from biting too hard.

Many owners enjoy using Nerf toys with their cats. They enjoy chasing the small, fast-moving foam darts, which can simulate prey. As fun as this is, pet owners must exercise caution to ensure their cats do not ingest any toys. Their stomachs cannot break down the foam and blockages of the intestinal tract can result.

Catching and eating are two closely related but separate activities. Domestic cats often store caught food for eating later. Eating happens when the game is over, so incorporating food into hunting games tends to end the interest in play.

## References[]