

Enrichment & Playtime with My Cat

*Most people don't realize it, but cats **need** to play! Physical & mental enrichment is important for a happy, healthy, well-balanced kitty. This is even more important for younger cats or kittens – without this outlet, they could develop some behavior problems out of boredom. Cats are natural hunters & need to behave as such!*

At a minimum – every cat needs **at least two 15 minute interactive play sessions per day.**

- *These sessions should be at the same time every day* – the more consistent you are with your cat's daily routine, the more confident they are & the happier they are!
- These sessions involve you actively playing with your cat with things like a laser pointer or a feather wand.
 - Enticing toy movement is another fundamental aspect of playtime. Thinking about how prey would act in the wild when moving a toy will help create enticing and irresistible movements.
 - You should not dangle the toy in front of the cat's face; no type of prey would ever present itself to a cat. Instead, the toy should be moved away from him/her. Movements should be random and change direction unpredictably. This will keep a cat attentive and prevent him/her from losing interest.

In between these sessions, your cat should have access to solo toys & they should be switched out every few days so he/she does not get bored of them.

- Some solo toys to keep around the house are:
 - Toy mice
 - Paper balls
 - Plush toys
- If your cat really enjoys cat nip – sprinkle some on these toys every few days.

If you want to further excite your kitty, try an interactive solo toy! Such as:

- Automatic Cat Laser Toy
- Swimming Robot Fish Toys
- Petmate Butterfly
- SmartyKat Electronic Motion Cat Toys

There are also more thought-provoking toys to occupy your cat & make them work for their food! Such as:

- Food puzzles
- Interactive feeders
- Go Fish Slow Feeder

Every kitty household absolutely needs feline furniture, as well! Some feline furniture to have:

- **Cat trees (at least 6 ft high) – this is a must!**
 - Cats love to observe from high up & the more vertical space they have, the bigger their “territory” is, which is so important to a cat!
 - It also gives them a place to go that's out of reach if they're feeling overwhelmed by other pets, children, or visitors.
 - Set it up by the window so your kitty can get some extra enrichment watching the birds!

- **Scratching posts – this is a must!**
 - Without these, your furniture will definitely suffer! Scratching is a natural behavior & *cannot be trained out of a cat*, we just need to give them options to perform this behavior!
- Shelving
- Cat cubbies/hideaways

Another fun activity to do with your cat is clicker training!

- Some fun tricks you can train your cat to do are:
 - Sit
 - High Five
 - Come
- Use this link to get started: <http://www.thejacksongalaxyproject.org/2018-Cat-Pawsitive-Clicker-Training-Basics-Handout-FINAL.pdf>

Finally, if you're feeling extra adventurous – you can give your cat some safe, outdoor time! We *only* recommend this in two ways:

- Install a catio space! Check out this site on how to do that: <https://catiospaces.com/>
- Leash training – this involves training your cat to wear a harness & leash and taking them out for a stroll! You should only try this if it seems like your cat **wants** to go outside.
 - It can take time for a cat to acclimate to a harness/leash – take it slow & follow these directions: <https://www.jacksongalaxy.com/blog/leash-walk-my-cat-ask-the-cat-daddy/>