

How to Control Kitty Playtime

One of the most rewarding things you can do with your cat is to play together. Playtime is a great way for you to relax and to bond with your feline friend. Playing together interactively also has benefits for your cat. It is a great form of exercise - for cats of all ages and sizes - and it makes it easier for you to establish a connection. But if you're a cat owner, you have probably witnessed what happens when gentle play gets out of control. Even the most controlled of environments can sometimes turn into rough-and-tumble fights! This can be particularly painful, because your cat is equipped with a full set of sharp teeth and claws to make a statement. To some extent, this kind of behavior should be expected. Cats were wild before they were domesticated, after all, and they still retain some of their feral instincts. In fact, some breeds of cats are still very, very wild: think about the lion, tiger, and cheetah, to name a few. But your pet cat, despite his evolutionary heritage, needs to know where the boundaries between safe, acceptable play and rough, unacceptable play are. The best way to establish these boundaries is to start training your cat when he is young - still a kitten. Kittens are naturally curious creatures who will play with almost anything, including your hands and possessions, if you don't quickly get their attention with an appropriate toy. If you play with your kitten using your hands or feet, he will learn to associate them with playtime, even as he grows into adulthood. Then, when you try to play, he will be going after your body with his fully-formed teeth and claws! Avoid this problem by early lessons. Teach your kitten to play with certain allowed cat toys - not with you or your things. Just like kittens, adult cats need and benefit from playtime. Some adult cats can become obese, but the exercise they get from regular interactive play with you will help stop this problem from developing. Regular interactive play can often stave off boredom, which is important, because boredom and stress can lead to aggressive behavior in some adult cats. This is often manifested as rough play or even biting. If you notice that your cat is acting aggressive, avoid the potential problems: don't play with him at all. This way, you avoid encouraging or reinforcing unacceptable behavior. If your cat is in a "rough play" mood, don't abandon him; just give him an appropriate way to release some of his pent up negative energy. You can try using toys, like stuffed animals or feathers, that he can really let loose and tumble around with when he is feeling rowdy. To encourage appropriate play behavior, use positive reinforcement. Whenever your cat exhibits good behavior, make sure to reward him with plenty of praise and even sometimes indulge him with a delicious kitty treat!

About the Author

Ian Spellfield, an occasionally frustrated pet owner, tests and reviews cat urine removal products at his blog [Urine Off Reviews](http://www.urineoffreviews.com). You can follow his reviews and occasional heartache at <http://www.urineoffreviews.com>

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