

Play with me! 52

Hunting is a sport for cats, and you can join in, too! Play games with your domestic tiger such as cat ice hockey, slalom run, squash, or just get him running round and round the room

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Fun and games for cats!



What's the state of play with this mouse; it's not moving ...



... maybe I can breathe life into it?



Not many cats enjoy hunting super-sized mice: Bibi has two!



Kit bits

TOY MICE

Category: Toys for retrieving, hunting, and prey games with a 'license to kill'

Suitable for: Cats of all ages

Benefits: Sharpens hunting skills, improves physical and mental fitness, and helps use up excess energy

Important: Do not let your cat play with very small mice that have detachable eyes or parts that are easy to swallow

Fishing fun for skilful paws

Cats are avid hunters and frequently demonstrate perseverance and skill in order to catch potential prey. Cats who are allowed outside will hunt for up to six hours at a time, although is usually successful only one in every 15 attempts.

Experienced hunters are used to investing time in catching their prey, and can't allow themselves to be discouraged by failure.

Invisible prey

Games where the toy must first be found and then caught before it can be played with are particularly exciting, as they elicit curiosity, which gets the cat involved as he tries to locate the prize. Many pet shops sell different toys for tactile games such as this, like the well-known colourful plush cube that has a cross-cut opening on all four sides, and on the top. Inside the cube are four fluffy balls. The cat has to insert his paw inside the cube and retrieve the balls before being able to play with them.

This toy is usually popular with most cats, but the plush cube is a bit soft and not very stable, and tends to collapse in on itself when played with, which could mean that you cat will lose interest relatively quickly.

toy is well suited to solitary games and can be carried around in a cat's mouth. Since cats may chew on feathers, there's a risk of injury from their sharp ends, so please ensure you supervise your cat when he is playing with these. After the game, the feather toys should be stowed away, ready for next time.



This toy made of straw and feathers is very appealing to felines. Featherlight, it can be dashed back and forth between the paws, caught in the air, and pounced on.

Try filling the cube with different toys to keep it exciting. A shoe box with a lid and two to three holes cut in the side will fulfil the same purpose, and be a little more stable for enthusiastic patting games.

The toys inside the box should be made out of a material that is easy to grip with the

claws or paws, such as leather or sisal (a kind of carpet-like material).

The 'Swiss cheese' toy

This cube toy looks like a piece of Swiss cheese. On the surface and the sides are openings through which balls with bells on

The mouse goes round and round, just waiting to be caught by an attentive predator.

At last he has it in his paws!

The mouse has been rubbed with the intoxicating smell of catnip.





A Cat-wrap

A rolled-up rug makes an excellent hiding place

B Well camouflaged

The motto here is 'See but don't be seen'

C Stalker

A toy is produced and arouses the interest of the cat, who is mesmerised by his prey

D Tunnel

Cats are magically drawn to small hideaways like this

E Look-out duty

Hiding, exploring, and observing are instinctive behaviours for every cat





Fun and games for cats!

Top: From the chair, the feathers can easily be batted with both paws.

Middle: The prey disappears under the chair ... as does the cat, head first.

Bottom: As the feathers dance around the chair legs, the wild hunt begins.



means that the toy slows down, until you stop the movement and thus the game. This is also the best way to say 'game over' if you've had enough. Cats are sensitive creatures who can perceive your moods and assess whether or not you are enthusiastic about what you're doing.

Round and round

Show your cat that you have a toy and move it slowly away from him. Make it disappear behind your back, and then reappear on the other side of you. By now, the hunting instinct of your moggy should be aroused and you can really get into the game. To warm up your cat, make a circle around your body with the

The feathers play-rod whirling across the floor will bring even the shyest cat out of her shell.





A Warm up

Any sporting activity should always begin with a warm up. Willow runs under her owner's legs as part of hers

B Get going

This is followed by a chase, ensuring that she can't quite reach the feathers

C & D Leaps and bounds

The activity increases pace, the acrobatics become more daring. Moves include high jumps typical of those which feral cats use when hunting prey

E Cool down

After 10 minutes or so, slowly end the game. Allow your cat to catch the prey and then let her rest