



## Tips to keep your cat entertained (and out of trouble)

Cats are known to be more independent than their canine friends, however they are primed to pursue prey and for this reason they love to play. The more you play with your kitty or set up games for them the happier – and more likely to stay out of trouble – they will be.

The Cat Protection Society of Victoria Behaviourist, Natalya Dundovich feels it is important to engage with your four legged friend and to keep them entertained.

“We can help our cats stay out of trouble by increasing the play that we are doing with them, especially hunting style games as this makes cats feel good and reduces stress. We can also get them foraging for their meals, starting with scattering food on the floor and pointing out the pieces. This is another way to reduce their stress,” Ms Dundovich said.

Here are some of the things you can do with your furry friends to leave them purring.

### Throw away the food bowl

“Cats are natural hunters and are designed to work hard for their meals. However, when they live the pampered life, their human servants often deliver their meals on a platter once or twice a day. Food is one of the most powerful motivators for good behaviour because all cats get hungry. So use this to your advantage and throw away the food bowl,” Ms Dundovich said.

“Instead of giving your cat a bowl full of free rewards each day, put their dry food into a container or your treat pouch and use it to reward them for behaviours that you like. Because you are rewarding so many repetitions of desired behaviours in just one day, you will notice a dramatic improvement in your cat’s overall behaviour and it will also keep your cat stimulated and entertained,” she said.

### Cat Puzzles & Homemade Toys

There are many cat puzzles you can purchase from pet stores that will keep kitties entertained but you can also create your own puzzles and toys from home.

Crumbled paper is always an exciting toy for cats. They love the sound and to chase and wrestle it. Just make sure they don’t chew or swallow the paper, especially when they are kittens.

A wand is also a popular toy, you can make your own by tying a feather to the end of a stick. Pull it slowly away from your cat, then watch as it leaps to catch it in the air.

### Fetch

It is not just dogs that enjoy playing fetch. Find a toy that is easy for your cat to carry in their mouth, throw it, and wait for your cat bring it back. Reinforce this by petting or providing healthy treats.



### Food Foraging Games

Get your cat 'hunting' for their meals. You can provide some of your cat's meals through dry food dispensing items and interactive toys.

"Start simply by hiding some of your cat's dry food in a toilet paper roll or egg carton and encourage them to go find it. Because you are providing an appropriate outlet for your cat's instinctive behaviours, you will notice a significant decrease in undesirable behaviour. Not only is your cat burning energy, but they are using their brain to problem solve. This is exhausting work. We know that problem solving is a great way to promote neuroplasticity – meaning that when you have time to train your cat, they are more likely to learn new skills easily," Ms Dundovich said.

Check out this amazing website for inspiration and to challenge your cat even more <http://foodpuzzlesforcats.com/>

### Cat Apps and TV

There is an app for everything these days, including keeping felines entertained. These apps feature moving fish and other motion graphics designed specifically for cats. TV Platforms like 'Amazon Prime' are now offering free animal channels. While not all cats will enjoy this stimulation many will. It doesn't make for a rigorous workout so ensure you mix this play up with other activities.

### A Kitty Style Play Room

You can create a play room just for your cat (it doesn't need to be a whole room, a corner of the living room will suffice). In the room you can add cat furniture like a scratching post or a scratching bench. Providing a 'viewing window' to the outside world can also be a great way to keep your cat entertained. Cats are drawn to the outside world and love to keep an eye on what is going on out there.

### Light Play

We all know how much cats love chasing light reflections. Try catching light off an item like your watch and bounce it low on the wall and on the floor. Your moggie will love running after it and trying to 'catch' it. Ms Dundovich offers a word of caution though.

"Light/laser play should be kept to one to two minutes at a time, always supervised and ended by a small amount of food down for the cat to eat. Some cats can develop behavioural problems from light/laser play problems so if in doubt owners should opt for different types of play instead. If they notice concerns, owners should speak to their vet and a cat behaviourist," she said.

**The most important thing to remember when it comes to playing with your feline friend is to have fun. Playing is not just an activity that will keep your cat entertained it will help you bond, a fact that is sure to bring a smile to your face and leave your cat purring.**