

Catercize

Does your cat need to lose a few pounds? Incorporate play into her daily routine!

Ron Bast

Posted: Tue Aug 3 00:00:00 PDT 2004

"Cats are like us," Williams said. "They love to play, but they hate formal exercise, so make the exercise into play. Get out the laser pointer or flashlight and drive them crazy. Or get a wand toy and tease them with it until they react. Anything you can do to get the cat's hunting instincts going will work. Do it regularly and your cat will begin to get the exercise she needs.

"You can spend a fortune on cat toys, and that's fine. A lot of them are great fun, but you don't have to spend anything if you don't want to," Williams said. "Cats are pretty easy to please. Interactive toys are the best, but leave plenty of interesting stuff lying around so the cat will have something to play with when you're not home."

Make sure whatever you use is safe for your cat, Williams added. "No sharp ends or pieces the cat can swallow. Be creative, but be careful."

Will Work for Food

Some cats are so deep in their lazy rut that play won't work. When that happens, go beyond sneaky to downright dirty, said Alan Peters, an animal trainer and Ragdoll enthusiast in Charleston, S.C. "When they won't play, it's time to hit them where they live," Peters said. "In the food bowl. The laziest cat in the world will work for food. You just have to put it in places that require exercise to get at it. Put tiny portions in a number of different places around the house: on top of the cat tree, upstairs in the attic, downstairs in the basement and under the couch. Don't put a meal's worth in any one place. That way, the bum will have to keep working throughout the day."

Once you've got the cat moving, ambush it, Peters said. "Lazy is just another bad habit. Most cats really do want to move around and exercise, so once he's moving, reintroduce the idea of play," he said. "It doesn't have to be 30 minutes of aerobics. Cats are designed for short, intense bursts of activity followed by a good rest. Give them that and they'll be happy."

For the ultimate automated workout, Peters suggested bringing home another cat. "For me, that's a rule: a minimum of two cats. That way the workout goes on even when I'm not around, and when I'm home I don't have to do a darn thing besides watch and laugh my head off. Now that's the way to deal with exercise."

- More Activities With Cats -