

Cats Just Want to Have Fun

By understanding your kitten's penchant for play, you can create an interesting and stimulating environment for your pet.

Virginia Parker Guidry

Initially, social play involves multiple kittens (three or more), but after 8 weeks of age most social play is between pairs. As adults, not all cats will play socially. Object play looks similar, but involves an individual kitten chasing an inanimate object, such as a ping-pong ball. Object play increases at around 7 to 8 weeks of age and tends to continue into adulthood. "Object play predominates by 16 weeks but by 19 to 20 weeks, object play actually doubles in males compared to females of the same age," Schwartz said. "Motor patterns for social and object play are somewhat different," Melese said. "Repeated motor patterns are common in object play but rare in social play." Interestingly, male and female kittens tend to play differently. According to Schwartz, males are more likely to engage in object play. "Females tend to be more tolerant of group situations, so they may be more prone to group play." "We know that male kittens, from a very young age and onward, are more exuberant in play; they're certainly rougher," Schwartz said. "I think that's a guy thing."

Toys, Toys, Toys Toys are a great way to support your kitten's need for stimulating play. It is best to try different types to determine which kind your kitten prefers. "Every cat has a tendency to like one toy over another," Schwartz said. Kitten owners should consider their individual cat's personality and figure out what might be stimulating and interesting to the cat. "If we want our kitty cats to have environmental and social stimulation, it behooves us to think about what we want to do this week for our kitty cat," Virga said.

Virga suggests creating a chest filled with a variety of toys. Keep the chest hidden and rotate the toys in and out of your kitten's play routine, so the kitten is less likely to get bored. He also suggests shopping for toys that offer different visual, auditory, tactual and olfactory stimulation.