

## 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*

Also, keep playtime safe and hazard-free. Be aware that there are toys on the market that are potentially dangerous. "Not all of them are safe," Schwartz said. Avoid toys with parts that could be swallowed, such as small bells, ribbons, twine, and rubber bands. Check toys for sharp edges that could poke, prick or cut. Toys should be too large for your kitten to swallow, and nontoxic if accidentally ingested. "Kittens should not be allowed to play with plastic bags or aluminum foil," said veterinary behaviorist Lynne Seibert, DVM, clinical resident at the University of Georgia Animal Behavior Service. Remember to observe your kitten's play, and be wary of any possible dangers. "Supervise your kitten with any new toy," Seibert said.

The Human Play Pal is important for kitten owners to protect themselves from little claws and teeth. Young kittens do not usually inflict much damage, but serious injuries can occur when they grow and continue to attack their owner's body in play. To prevent overly exuberant or inappropriate play, use toys that keep the object of play at some distance from the human body. Prevent the kitten from learning to target hands or feet. And, do not play games that tease or frustrate the cat. "Even though we're using the word 'play,' it doesn't diminish the potential severity of the aggression," Virga said. "I've seen quite a few cases of kitties putting people in the hospital."

To better understand your kitten's world view, Virga encourages owners of indoor cats to think about what it might be like to stay indoors for several weeks. With little change in the environment or stimulation of some kind, "cabin fever" is sure to develop.

- More About Kittens -