

## How to Play With Your Cat

**A refresher course can put pizzazz back into playtime and allow your cats to use their natural hunting skills.**

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For cats, playtime is the closest thing to an actual hunt. Successful hunters are fast, confident and certain of their surroundings. So honing playtime skills is a way to boost their self-esteem.

The right atmosphere is crucial when reawakening your cats' hunting skills. View the carpet as a field and the furniture as substitute trees. Scatter a few boxes, paper bags or sofa cushions around the room to add bushes.

After you've set the stage, provide an assortment of prey. The best toys for interactive play look like fishing poles. They can have feathers, streamers or a toy dangling from a string attached to a pole. If your cats prefer air hunting, think like a bird. Don't fly continually; a bird must land occasionally and walk around. If your cat is a ground hunter, imagine what moves a mouse might make. It might run under a chair, then sneak a peek before darting across the room to hide behind a table leg. Don't always use frantic and fast movements; give your cats time to plan their attack. When playtime ends, put interactive toys away for safety, and to keep your cats from getting bored with them.

Play at least twice daily for about 10 to 15 minutes each time. If you're out of the house all day, a play session when you get home is important. The location for playtime depends on your cats' personalities. If they like being the center of things, play wherever your family spends most of its time. For timid cats, pick a quiet room. Choose a room with hiding places so they feel secure.

To ensure an enjoyable playtime for your cats, allow them to achieve many good captures during the game. If you always keep the toy out of reach, the cat will be frustrated. When you want to end the play session, decrease the activity's intensity. The injured prey should begin to die. This will slow your cat down and be a more natural end to the hunt.