

## Are Toys Important for Keeping My Cat Happy?

**CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses the importance of play, and some easy, inexpensive toys.**

*By Jeanne Adlon*

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Q: How important are toys for keeping my cat entertained?

A: There was a time when our cats spent a good part of the day outside where they could practice their stalking skills, chase leaves in the wind and romp around. Now most cats stay indoors, which is a much safer environment for them. However, that means it's up to us to keep them entertained and sometimes that requires a bit of creativity.

When I rescued my cat Simon, he was only about a week or two old. I was walking my dog Heidi and she pulled me over to a puddle that looked like it had a mouse in it. When I bent down to look I saw it was a poor tiny kitten! I picked him up and took him right to the vet. When I got him home, I made a safe and cozy place in my bathtub. This prevented him from crawling out and getting into trouble, but made showering quite a production. Now Simon is a big 8-year-old adult kitty, but he still thinks the bathtub is his playground. He likes to chase toys in there and take the occasional cat nap —with the shower curtain closed for privacy, of course!

I have found that cats which do not play regularly can become overweight, bored and sometimes destructive. If you have one of these, take a page out of Simon's book and try tossing some balls with bells on them, or catnip toys around the bathtub. You might find he will enjoy batting them around on the smooth surface.

If your kitty likes to wake you up in the morning, start the day by playing "chase the hand" with your hand under the covers. My cats get a kick out of this and it's a nice way to start the day. I also throw treats across the floor for them to chase — it's good exercise and better than just handling one to them. Laser toys are fun as well. Just point the light toward the wall or floor and off they'll go. But never point the light toward their eyes, please.

I always say toys do not have to be expensive. Check your local pet stores or florists for peacock feathers (I always put them away after play time). Make balls out of aluminum foil, though big enough to not roll under the couch. Catnip stuffed into an old sock with the other end secured is a crowd pleaser, as well pipe cleaners twisted into spirals. Experiment and see what works for your special kitty.