

CATS WHO PLAY ROUGH



There are two different kinds of play: Solitary and social.

Play is normal behaviour. It provides kittens with opportunities to develop their physical co-ordination and problem-solving skills but also a chance to practice social skills with other kittens. In social play it's common for kittens and young cats to be rough. They are practicing behaviour used to catch prey and they pretend to be aggressive, stalk, chase, pounce, swat, kick, scratch & bite each other. It's important not to encourage this behaviour when interacting with your kitten as they will not learn that it is inappropriate to use the same play with people.

How to reduce your cat's rough play behaviour

- Try using different toys to see which type they prefer. Some cats like swatting & batting small toys or balls, some like stalking & pouncing on toys as prey & others like dangly toys or toys which move when hidden.
- Rotate the toys regularly to provide variety and have one or two 5-10 minute play sessions per day
- Give your cat new things to investigate – a paper bag, a cardboard box, a pom-pom. If you have uncarpeted floors ping pong balls often provoke very amusing play and you might even find your cat playing with something unexpected that has dropped onto the floor. If this is the case make sure they don't try to eat whatever they're playing with!
- Play with your cat when they are at their most active – a good time is usually just before you feed them so that they feel they're being rewarded for catching prey (the toy)
- Use a variety of toys and rotate them so your cat doesn't get bored
- If your cat pounces, grabs your feet or ambushes your ankles as you walk, distract them by throwing toys to quickly redirect their attention
- Consider adopting another active cat to be a playmate
- Provide an outdoor enclosure so your cat has opportunities to hunt insects, chase leaves & generally be distracted
- If your cat starts to play rough, end the game, walk away, ignore them &/or leave the room

What NOT to do

- If you want to give them 'time-out' don't try to pick them up to move them as this could provoke them more. It's better to remove yourself
- Don't encourage your kitten or cat to play with your hands or feet or toys attached to gloves. Don't forget that kittens become cats with sharp claws and teeth and they need to learn at an early age what kind of play is acceptable
- Don't punish your cat physically as this may encourage even rougher play or even worse they may become frightened of your hands which could make things worse
- Don't run away from your cat or try to block their movements with your feet
- If all else fails you might try making a very loud noise to interrupt their rough behaviour. As soon as the behaviour stops direct their attention towards a toy thrown in another direction or a wand waved in front of them

This information is intended as a general guide only

