

ENRICHING YOUR CAT'S LIFE

Check out these links for more information

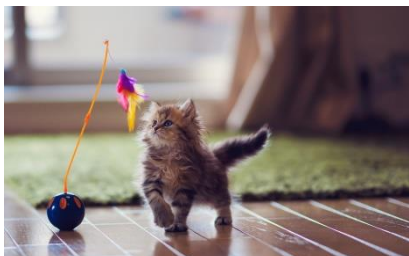
<https://rspcavic.org/learn/7-enrichment-ideas-for-your-cat/>

<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/enrichment-ideas-activities-and-products-indoor-cats>

<https://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com/its-cat-play-fun-feline-enrichment/>



Your cat's mental well-being is as important as their physical well-being. A cat who plays adapts more easily to new people and sounds



On average, an outdoor cat spends about three and a half hours chasing, pouncing and hunting. Cats kept indoors need to go through the same motions during play, otherwise they become bored, frustrated, restless or anxious & this can lead to unacceptable, anti-social behaviour. All cats will play but depending on their personality, age and preference it will look different. Some are slower to start playing and watch for a while at first, some like to chase things on the ground and some like to jump in the air. It's your job to get to know what works best for your cat. You will need to try a variety of toys and then keep changing and rotating to keep things fresh. If you have a multi-cat household it's important that you have solo playtime with each cat otherwise the most confident cat will win the game every time. Play little and often – just 5 minutes several times a day will help you bond with your cat.



How do you know if your cat is not playing enough?

- They will sometimes bite you out of the blue or surprise-attack things like your legs, furniture, plants and other animals in the house
- They will want to play late at night
- They will over-react and become stressed when they see other cats outside

Can you play too much with your cat?

NO!! You might think your cat is over-stimulated and has turned into an aggressive monster who goes over the top - but that doesn't mean they've had enough – in fact it's quite the opposite - you need to play more to channel their excess energy! Just make sure you use toys you can keep at arm's length!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMPjoNg3nv8 Jackson Galaxy – Cat won't play? You're doing it wrong

What kind of toys and games can you play with your cat?

- Never offer your fingers or hands for your cat to chase
- You can buy toys or make them. Google 'home made cat toys'. A paper bag, piece of paper or toilet roll can turn into a successful 'Accidental' toys like an almond, a twig, a blade of grass or a are often much better than expensive toys



simple
toy.
feather

<https://excitedcats.com/diy-cat-toys/>

<https://www.worldsbestcatlitter.com/2014/03/the-10-best-homemade-cat-toys/>

Playing safe

Whatever type of enrichment you choose, make sure your cat is safe. Cats are capable of eating almost any object, and this can cause serious problems. They can get also get caught up in string so these kind of toys must only be used when you are there supervising.

Different kinds of play

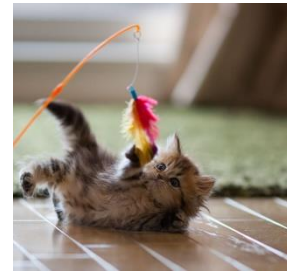
Self-play

- Some cats like playing with toys on their own. They like to roll around using their paws and back legs to bunny-kick, wrestle or bite a furry toy or small fake mouse, and some like chasing balls
- Some cats like watching videos of moving objects such as fish swimming in the sea, and respond with noises and chirrups. Google 'cat video games' or 'cat TV' for ideas You can also buy battery-operated toys and videos eg 'Through a cat's ear' and games where they paw the laptop screen to catch a mouse.
- There are also soundtracks made specially for cats for when you're not at home



Interactive play helps you to build a bond with your cat & playing together is a fun and positive experience

- A wand-toy with a feathered or tasselled end that can be chased is popular with most cats and it also keeps them at arm's length! Pay attention when you play - don't just wave the wand around - put thought and energy into the game by moving it away from the cat (not closer) and making random movements just like prey that the cat might chase (and don't look at your phone at the same time!)



- Some cats enjoy chasing a laser point light but make sure you finish by pointing the light at a toy so they can catch the 'prey' or they will feel frustrated. Don't allow the laser to shine into the cat's eyes as it can damage their vision.

Providing enrichment through food gives your cat a chance to hunt and is a great way to get them to work for it. It also keeps them occupied when you aren't at home. Make sure any food you use is part of their daily allowance and not in addition to it.

- Your cat's wild ancestors used their brain & instincts to hunt, search for and catch food so feeding your cat from the same bowl in the same place can be boring. Try scattering their dry food portion across the floor to provide more of a challenge or hide small piles in different places. (Just be sure to clean up any uneaten food regularly!)
- An interactive puzzle feeder or snuffle mat can keep your cat motivated and engaged at feeding time particularly if they are motivated by food. You can make your own puzzle feeders with toilet rolls
- Another way to provide enrichment is to provide food with a variety of textures. Try alternating wet and dry food to keep your kitty guessing. You might also like to treat them to the occasional crunchy or creamy treat to vary their food experience



Create a smell smorgasbord

Outdoor cats naturally encounter new smells on a daily basis so stimulating your cat's senses with new scents is a great way to enrich their environment. Cats get used to smells quickly so rotate scents and replace items frequently.



- Grow some cat grass for them to chew on which aids digestion.
- Grow catnip, give them some dried catnip, or let them play with a toy containing catnip. Catnip is a synthetic version of the odourless pheromone normally left by happy contented cats when they rub against objects in their environment. Some cats react strongly to it and roll around, rub, sniff, or even drool in excitement whilst others remain totally unaffected.
- Other things you could give your cat include sticks, leaves or blankets perfumed with essential oils (make sure you check the particular oil isn't harmful to cats)

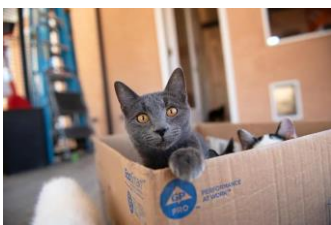
Provide enrichment in your home by creating levels and hidey holes

Cats love having a view so position high perches next to windows to bring some of the outdoors in. To provide your cat with hours of fun sometimes it's as easy as clearing the back of a couch or table near a window and positioning a birdbath or bird feeder in the garden in front of it. But make sure your window and fly screens are secure and made of metal mesh! Provide tall structures and elevated perches or resting areas which allow your cat to climb. You can buy cat scratching posts quite cheaply on the internet or make one yourself. Search Google for 'DIY cat furniture' and look around for ideas. Some people go all out and provide highways on the walls for the cat to walk, jump and rest on. The best scratching posts (sometimes called trees) are really sturdy and have large platforms so your cat can stretch out.



Create cat comfort zones/safe spots

Calming activities are just as much a part of enrichment as stimulating activities. Every animal needs a "comfort zone" where they can go to feel safe and relax. Closets, open crates, high shelves, cat trees, space under beds and rooms sectioned off with baby gates are great places to put a comfy cat bed or blanket. If your cat is resting in its safe place, be sure to leave them alone as this is their quiet time-out. You can even spray the item with a calming smell such as Feliway or lavender oil but always check that any product you use is not toxic to cats first. Hideaways can be made from cardboard boxes or igloo/clam/pod beds.



Build catios and outside enclosures

A catio is an outdoor enclosure which can be attached to a window or cat flap which allows your cat to choose where they spend their time. It allows them to be outdoors without risk and they can watch what's happening and express some of their natural behaviours whilst they experience the ever changing sounds, scents and smells of the outdoors. Search the internet for 'Catteries and Catio's'.



Train your cat and teach them tricks

Training can provide great mental stimulation and cats can be taught to respond to cues such as "sit", "down" and "wave" using treats and positive reinforcement. Clicker training is one of the best ways to train. Search online or youtube for instructions. Walking your cat on a lead is another great way for them to explore the great outdoors safely. As cats aren't huge fans of change, this will be a slow process using lots of positive reinforcement and tasty treats and remember the big world can be a scary place at first!.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8N1622YxINk> Jackson Galaxy – treat training your cat



What if your cat won't play?

You're doing it wrong! And you haven't found their mojo...

Keep trying different things until you find what they like. You might try installing a camera and leaving out an assortment of toys to see which ones they prefer. Some hi-tech systems even allow you to talk to them and dispense treats remotely...

HAPPY PLAYING!!!

