

Managing Your Kitten's Rough Play

By Sheila Segurson, DVM

Play is a very important and fun part of a kitten's life. Teaching your kitten proper play skills and playing with him every day will give him appropriate outlets for his energy. To decrease the chance that he will seek out human hands and feet as play toys, don't ever play with your kitten with your hands and feet. In your kitten's mind, a playful nip is indistinguishable from a painful bite. He will not understand that it's not okay to chew on or bite people unless you teach him.



If your kitten plays with your hands or feet, make your hand or foot go limp (he's more likely to continue attacking a moving object) and say "Ouch!" in a loud voice. Then, pull out an interactive toy, such as a feather attached to a wand, and play with him vigorously. You are teaching him that hands are no fun to play with, but interactive toys are great fun because they are a challenge.

Kittens need active play and they also like novelty, so buy several different types of interactive toys for her and find out which ones she likes best. You should play with the toys with your cat; do not set them out and expect her to play with them on her own. If she is not interested in them for the first few days, give her time, and try different toys.

One way to keep her from getting bored with her toys is to put some of her toys out of reach, so that they are new and exciting when you pull them out for a play session. If you do leave toys around the house for her to play with, rotate them every few days to increase the novelty factor. Toys that encourage the use of multiple senses (i.e., sight, smell, hearing, touch) are often exciting for kittens. If you play with your kitten regularly, you can engage her in fun before she decides to pounce on you!

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