Cat Toys And How To Use Them

"Safe" Toys
There are many factors that contribute to the safety or danger of a toy. Many of those factors, however, are completely dependent upon your cat's size, activity level and personal preference. Another factor to be considered is the environment in which your cat spends her time. Although we can't guarantee your cat's enthusiasm or her safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines.

Be Cautious
The things that are usually the most attractive to cats are often the very things that are the most dangerous. Cat-proof your home by checking for: string, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins, needles, and anything else that could be ingested. All of these items are dangerous, no matter how cute your cat may look when she's playing with them.

Avoid or alter any toys that aren't "cat-proof" by removing ribbons, feathers, strings, eyes, or other small parts that could be chewed and/or ingested.

Soft toys should be machine washable. Check labels for child safety, as a stuffed toy that's labeled as safe for children under three years old, doesn't contain dangerous fillings. Problem fillings include things like nutshells and polystyrene beads. Also, rigid toys are not as attractive to cats.

Toys We Recommend
Active Toys:
- Round plastic shower curtain rings are fun either as a single ring to bat around, hide or carry, or when linked together and hung in an enticing spot.
- Plastic rolling balls, with or without bells inside.
- Ping-Pong balls and plastic practice golf balls with holes, to help cats carry them. Try putting one in a dry bathtub, as the captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa. You'll probably want to remove the balls from the bathtub before bedtime, unless you can't hear the action from your bedroom. Two o'clock in the morning seems to be a prime time for this game.
- Paper bags with any handles removed. Paper bags are good for pouncing, hiding and interactive play. They're also a great distraction if you need your cat to pay less attention to what you're trying to accomplish. Plastic bags are not a good idea, as many cats like to chew and ingest the plastic.
- Sisal-wrapped toys are very attractive to cats that tend to ignore soft toys.
- Empty cardboard rolls from toilet paper and paper towels are ideal cat toys, especially if you "unwind" a little cardboard to get them started.

Catnip:

- Catnip-filled soft toys are fun to kick, carry and rub.
- Plain catnip can be crushed and sprinkled on the carpet, or on a towel placed on the floor if you want to be able to remove all traces. The catnip oils will stay in the carpet, and although they're not visible to us, your cat will still be able to smell them.
- Catnip sprays rarely have enough power to be attractive to cats.
- Not all cats are attracted to catnip. Some cats may become over-stimulated to the point of aggressive play and others may be slightly sedated.
- Kittens under six months old seem to be immune to catnip.
- Catnip is not addictive and is perfectly safe for cats to roll in, rub in or eat.

Comfort Toys
- Soft stuffed animals are good for several purposes. For some cats, the stuffed animal should be small enough to carry around. For cats that want to "kill" the toy, the stuffed animal should be about the same size as the cat. Toys with legs and a tail seem to be even more attractive to cats.
- Cardboard boxes, especially those a tiny bit too small for your cat to really fit into.

Get The Most Out Of Toys!
- Rotate your cat's toys weekly by making only four or five toys available at a time.
- Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your cat has a huge favorite, like a soft "baby" that she loves to cuddle with, you should probably leave that one out all the time, or risk the wrath of your cat!
- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses - at least one toy to carry, one to "kill," one to roll and one to "baby."
- "Hide and Seek" is a fun game for cats to play. "Found" toys are often much more attractive than a toy which is blatantly introduced.