

Playing with Your Pet

Play is a very important part of life for your pet. Just like humans, cats and dogs often learn and practice vital life skills through play. Kittens and puppies tend to play a lot, but when pets get older they sometimes need a bit of encouragement.

Why should you play with your pets?

Cats and dogs hone their hunting skills such as stalking, pouncing, chasing and catching through play. It can also help to occupy pets, prevent boredom and reduce the chance of developmental and behavioural issues.

Play also doubles as exercise. The more time cats and dogs spend doing active play, the less chance they have of becoming overweight. This is an especially important form of exercise for indoor cats who tend to spend a lot more time sleeping than outdoor cats.

A very important benefit of play is that it helps the bonding process between you and your pet. When you play together, your pet will see you as being on the same level as them. This temporary change in status allows you to build the trust and friendship you and your pet feel for each other.

What should your pet play with?

What your pet plays with can make a difference to the quality of their play time. Pets are naturally inquisitive and will often seek out their own playthings. Balls of paper, odd socks and cardboard boxes can all seem very exciting to pets, but you might not think the same thing.

A good pet toy generally has two characteristics; they provide pets with stimulating challenges and encourage them to express their natural instincts. Ideally, you should supply your pet with a number of different toys. Giving them a choice in this way will maintain their interest and allow them to experience different items.

Buying toys that have been designed in partnership with animal behaviour specialists will encourage your pets to play with them, not with other items from around the house. Specially designed pet toys give you confidence that your pet is having fun and is completely safe.

How should you encourage play?

Though pets often play of their own accord, it's important to make sure you encourage them to do so. One of the key ways to do this is to play with them! There are many toys that are designed for just this purpose, such as frisbees or balls to throw for dogs, or rod toys or laser pens to play with cats.

To sustain your pet's interest in their toys, it's also a good idea to keep them in rotation. Rather than making all toys available constantly, you might like to leave only a few out at a time. This can make things more exciting for your pet, and can add some much-needed variety to their play.

If your pet needs an extra incentive to engage in active play, have a look at treat holding and treat dispensing toys. These toys are designed to keep pets interested in play by randomly dispensing treats and dry food. Many of them are adjustable, which means that you can customise them to suit your pet. This is ideal if you think that your pet is finding it too easy, or too difficult, to get treats!

Pet toys are an inexpensive way to bring variety and stimulation to your pet's life. They can also be

a great tool for keeping them active and healthy. When you're playing with your pet, remember that if you're having fun, they are too!