

Cat Play

By Lisa Treen with photography by Animax

A number of editions ago, our favourite cat writer, Brad Kullos, wrote about the importance of play with your cat. This edition we look at how to make stimulating, fun and inexpensive toys that you can put together in an afternoon. All of the materials can be found in your local craft store and are plentiful in the larger chains like Lincraft and Spotlight.

Cats are natural predators and they love to pounce on toys and play with items that bounce or flit. Active play with your cat increases the bond between you and gives your cat much needed exercise and helps lessen the chance that you'll end up with a portly puss. If your cat is a night howler, giving her some active play before bedtime will tame the tiger within. You'll find that your cat is more inclined to retire when you do because she's tuckered out.

We enlisted the advice and creative skills of our friends at the CatWorld site and were impressed with some of the great ideas many forum members had for cheap and cheerful toy ideas. We bought a bunch of items and our shopping list came to just under \$15.00.

- **Ping Pong balls:** these basic cheapo ping pong balls make for great stand alone toys. Cats love to bat these around a room but they can get easily lodged under couches and other household furniture. So a great suggestion is to let your cat play with them in a shower recess or empty bath. The balls will ping off the hard surfaces and make a wonderful noise.

- **Pipe cleaners:** really big craft ones are super soft and are very flexible. They can be bent into all sorts of crafty shapes or you can make wild looking bug-like creatures out of them.

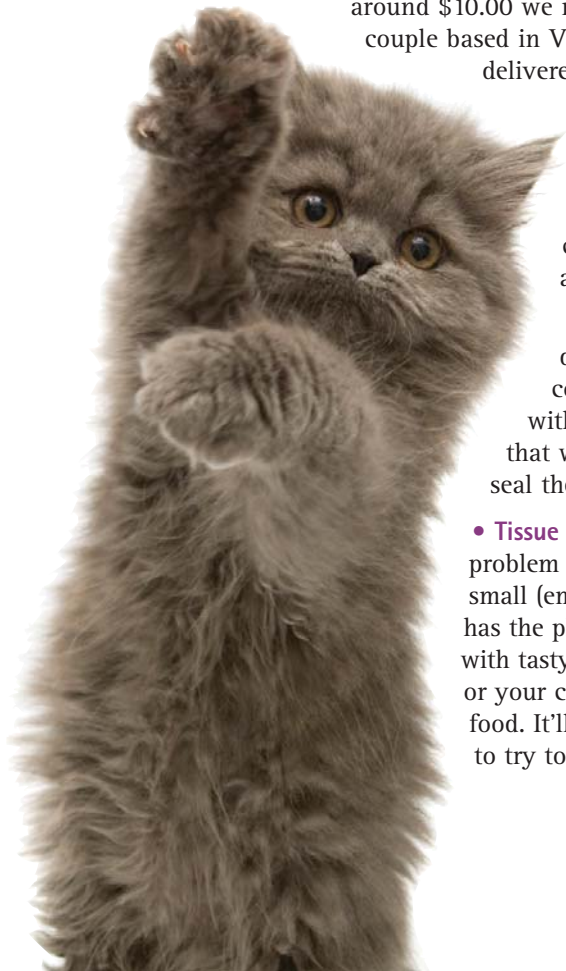
- **Pom Poms:** make your own if you have the time, patience and plenty of yarn or wool, otherwise you can cheat and buy packets of them. They come in a variety of sizes and colours. Stick a couple of small ones with paste, glue onto ping pong balls for added fun.

- **Feathers:** packets of dyed large feathers from large birds like chooks and ducks can deliver hours of fun. Dangle them from a string, loop them together, thread them through a pipe cleaner bug or just let your cat bat them around the house. Long Peacock feathers also are a favourite for keen kitties. These large, colourful feathers can be a little tricky and expensive to find, however we found some on ebay. For around \$10.00 we received about 20 from a couple based in Victoria. We had the feathers delivered within a few days and little needs to be done to them to make a hand-held teasy toy.

- **Foil balls:** also found in craft stores, these spikey, colourful balls are lightweight and make a wonderful sound.

- **Old film canisters:** in this digital age they're sure to be a collectors item soon. Fill them with a tinkly bell or other items that will rattle and make sure you seal the top tightly.

- **Tissue box:** this is a great toy for the problem solvers in your family. Get a small (empty) tissue box—the type that has the plastic slit at the opening. Fill with tasty treats like Greenies, Seaflex, or your cat's favourite dry crunchie food. It'll test your cat's mental abilities to try to get the treats out of the box.



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Other rattly items can be placed in the empty box for cats that are not interested in treats.

- **Chinese noodle boxes:** these cute boxes just need the wire handle taken off them and then punch little holes in them. Fill these with treats that are just small enough to tumble out of the holes.

- **Crinkly shopping bags:** some fashion companies like Jay Jay's have sturdy plastic shopping bags. Snip the handles off the bag so that your cat can't get these stuck around her neck. Cut open the bottom of the bag so that your cat can use this as a crinkly tunnel.

- **Baby toys:** purchased new or from op shops, these can make great toys for cats as well. Try a wrist rattle to keep her amused or a play mat with dangly objects.

Go to www.catworld.com.au for basic health and nutrition advice and friendly cat chat.

