

YOUR CAT THE HUNTER

As your cat is long-sighted they cannot see objects close up, so they use their whiskers to locate the position of their prey

Your cat has a special reflective membrane at the back of their eyes and pupils that dilate fully to help them see well in dim low light conditions

Your cat's tongue is covered with tiny, hooked spines, enabling them to remove fur and feathers and clean off any flesh from the bones of their prey

Your cat has protractible claws that remain withdrawn in a protective sheath to keep them sharp and ready for hunting

Your cat is a carnivore and converts protein from a meat source for energy, so cannot survive on a vegetarian diet

Your cat's hearing and sense of balance and movement are finely tuned to successfully locate and catch small prey

Your cat's eyes are located on the front of their head to help them judge distances when hunting

Your cat has four canine teeth (long fangs, top and bottom, used to catch and hold and kill prey) and ten premolars and four molars (used for tearing meat to make portions small enough to swallow)

Their skeletons are supported by long, lean muscles that give them jumping prowess and the ability to run in short bursts at speeds of up to 30mph to catch their prey

Your cat's digestive system is adapted to process frequent small meals (e.g. rodents) throughout a twenty-four hour period

WHY DOES MY CAT BRING ANIMALS OR BIRDS IN FOR ME?

When your cat has caught something they will often bring it home rather than discard it outdoors.

This instinct to bring prey back to a safe environment before eating is a natural behaviour in cats and shows how secure your cat feels at home.

Although this can be very distressing to see, you should never punish a cat for doing this.

WHY DOES MY CAT BRING MICE HOME ALIVE AND THEN PLAY WITH THEM?

This may look cruel but cats are not doing this for entertainment.

Prey species are manipulated by cats in this way (to help tire and disorientate them) as they want to make sure that they can kill the prey when necessary without being injured.

WHY DOES MY CAT HUNT IF THEY ARE WELL FED AT HOME?

Your cat's motivation to hunt is not influenced by whether they are hungry.

The only thing that might change is the intensity and duration of their hunting; cats that are not hungry will still catch prey but may not kill or eat it.

SHOULD I DISCOURAGE MY CAT FROM HUNTING?

All cats are hunters and this applies to your cat too, even if you keep them indoors or they choose not to go outdoors very often.

Physically, your cat is built to hunt and the motivation to pounce on small things that move is very strong. All cats need to at least pretend to hunt to keep fit and healthy, physically and mentally, so you can help your cat by providing them with plenty of opportunity for 'predatory play', rather than the real thing.

See advice sheets [How should I play with my cat?](#) and [I'm finding my cat's hunting a problem – what should I do?](#) for further information.

HOW SHOULD I PLAY WITH MY CAT TO SIMULATE HUNTING?

Cats hunt using two basic methods:-

- 1) Stalk, run and pounce
- 2) Stationary, sit and wait.

The first method is very active and uses lots of energy in a short space of time, the second requires the cat to remain motionless for long periods of time and pounce only when the prey emerges from its hiding place.

Both of these styles can be simulated indoors by toys and games.

Stalk, run and pounce games

Toys that encourage your cat to use the more active hunting method are ones that move rapidly and randomly, mimicking the behaviour of a small prey animal. Fishing rods with a small toy or feather at the end can be very appealing for your cat, if you move it in this way either along the floor or through the air.

You will find that your cat plays in short bursts, maybe for only seconds at a time, but that is perfectly normal as this uses up a lot of energy and isn't behaviour that they would naturally keep up for long periods.

Stationary, sit and wait games

Placing small toys inside a box with holes in (so they can see it and possibly use their paw) might keep their interest and stimulate their brain, even if they aren't burning too many calories!

Some commercial battery-operated toys are based around an object randomly going in and out of view from a hidden position.

You might also consider placing a stick with a feather on the end under a blanket or rug and poking it out every now and then, for your cat to see, before withdrawing it quickly to the hidden space under the rug.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE MY CAT TO PLAY?

Play needs to mimic predation as closely as possible to maintain your cat's interests. For example, cats are most interested in toys that are the same size and texture of natural prey.

Cats tend to prefer real fur and feather over fake fur and other textures such as plastic.

Novelty is always important and this can be achieved by placing all toys out of sight and rotated on a regular basis so they are always playing with a 'new' toy.