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Human and Kitten Play

Cats and people are social creatures. Engaging in activities that are enjoyed together will enhance the relationship between you and your kitten. These activities may be in the form of interactive play and training. Teach kittens to play with people with interactive toys rather than with hands.

-  A wand toy with a teaser on the end will simulate the stalk, chase, and capture sequence in the cat.

The Hunt and Chase Game

1. You should initiate and end the game. Have special toys that are used for this game and keep them out of reach of the kitten until play time.
2. Give the verbal cue “Let’s play” and present the wand toy. Move the toy slightly back and forth along the ground to foster interest or chase. Hiding the teaser around a corner or piece of furniture and making it move slowly out of sight, can peak a kitten’s interest in the item. Keep the toy at a level that does not require the kitten to leap high in the air to try to get the toy.
3. Let the cat catch the teaser. The chase is part of the fun, but make sure the kitten is able to catch the toy. Once caught, engage her in a gentle game of tug. Verbally reward her interest in the toy.
4. To teach the release of the teaser on cue: freeze (stop tugging and any toy movement). Give the verbal cue “drop it” and prompt it with a treat directly under the cat’s nose. Reward with the treat for dropping the teaser. A marker such as a click or other event marker could be used to mark the precise moment of the release.
5. Add in some training such as a sit, high five, or go to place and reward the behavior with “Let’s play” and presentation of the wand toy. This helps to control the kitten’s excitement level while working on manners training at the same time.
6. Repeat the above steps. Eventually, you will delay the presentation of the treat after giving the “drop it” cue.
7. When the game is over, let the kitten know by saying something such as, “All done,” and engaging her in an independent activity such as searching for treats or playing with another toy independent of you. The wand toy should be placed away and out of sight.

Helpful hints:

Have two identical wand toys. When the cat releases the teaser, reinforce the release by bringing out the other wand toy.

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