



**OPERATION
KINDNESS**

Rough Play in Kittens

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It is not uncommon for young kittens raised as a single kitten to use their teeth or claws more frequently or harder than kittens who grow up with litter mates. When they are raised with other kittens, they learn how to more appropriately use their teeth and claws during play and learn to control the pressure of their bite. Unfortunately, as humans we are unable to teach them how hard or how soft to bite. What we can do is teach them more appropriate ways to play with people!

When playing with cats or kittens it is important to remember their predatory sequence: hunt, catch, kill, eat, groom, sleep.

- Start with hunt. Get out your wand toy and let them hunt it.
 - Play with your kitten for 5-10 minutes, depending on their energy level and how long they are interested in play.
 - If your wand toy has a ribbon on it, pretend it is a snake sneaking around corners and slithering around.
 - If your wand toy has feathers on it, pretend like it is a bird floating through the air and occasionally landing and hopping along the ground.
 - If it has a ball or other small furry thing on the end, then it might play like a mouse darting from one hiding space to another.
 - You can use these types of prey mimicking movements to really let out that hunter energy in the cat. Let them chase the toy, stalk the toy, wiggle and pounce on the toy.
- When play starts to wind down, let them catch and sink their teeth and claws into the toy - for the catch and kill steps of the sequence!
- After several minutes of play, take away the toy and feed your cat some treats, their meal for that time of day, or a little spoonful of wet food. After they have their snack they should settle down for some light grooming and then a nap.
- Repeat this sequence as needed to keep your kitty entertained!
- Consider a laser light toy or a battery activated toy that lets them hunt, catch, and kill the toy with less effort on your part. It is important to still follow up with some treats and a nap otherwise your kitty will feel they need to hunt all day!
- Give your kitty plenty of things to appropriately use their nails on such as scratching posts and scratch pads.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.