# Toys That Are Safe for Your Kitten

[Kittens](http://www.vetstreet.com/kitten-basics-101-taking-care-of-your-new-kitten) love toys, and half the fun of having a kitten is playing with him and his toys. Toys are healthy for developing kitten minds. Kittens that are deprived of toys may have difficulty learning to play with them as adults. As with children, a variety of toys are now on the market designed to stimulate the intellect and the various senses, as well as to appeal to different age groups. And as with children, chances are your kitten will wander into your cupboard and find a plastic cap he likes much better than the expensive toy you've just presented to him. But be careful before you let him play with items he's found around the house. Many of them can be choking hazards or toxic if swallowed.

When choosing a [cat toy](http://www.vetstreet.com/category/sitecontent/cat-toys), whether homemade or store-bought, consider the following:

* Many items people think of as traditional kitten toys are also some of the most dangerous. String, ribbon, yarn and rubber bands are fun to play with, but [potentially deadly](http://www.vetstreet.com/dr-marty-becker/avoid-common-cat-and-kitten-toy-that-can-be-dangerous) if swallowed. And they are very easily swallowed because [cats](http://www.vetstreet.com/cats/) have tongues covered with rearward-facing barbs that make it hard for them to spit out string, yarn and similar things. Such long objects, if ingested, tend to travel lengthwise along the intestines. They can cause the intestine to scrunch up accordion-style, even turning in on itself like a sock. This is a life-threatening medical condition that usually requires surgery to correct.
* Fishing pole–type toys (a flexible stick with a line of string and a toy at the end) are lots of fun, but should be placed out of reach when you're not there to supervise.
* Also be careful about toys you give your kitten that might have strings, yarn, ribbons, feathers or plastic eyes or ornaments on them. Many furry mice on the market had plastic eyes and noses glued on them. The kitten could chew these off and swallow them. If you buy these, pull the eyes and nose off before giving the toy to your kitten.
* With plush toys, avoid fillings such as polystyrene beads, nutshells or beans.
* Kittens like small plush toys they can carry around like pretend prey, and larger stuffed toys of about their own size they can pretend to fight.
* Remote-controlled battery mice are fun for both of you, but don't leave any devices with batteries in them where your [cat](http://www.vetstreet.com/cats/) could possibly get the battery out.
* Kittens enjoy playing in paper bags, but be sure the bag is not where somebody could step on it not knowing a kitten was inside. Also, don't let your kitten play with plastic bags, as kittens tend to chew and swallow the plastic.
* Balls and toys should not be small enough to be inhaled or swallowed. Ping pong or practice golf balls (the ones with holes in them) are a good size and weight for kittens. Place the balls in a captive area, such as in a bathtub, for maximum fun. Or put one in an empty tissue box so your kitten can fish for it.
* Kittens under 6 months of age do not seem to notice catnip, so wait until your kitten is older to introduce that.
* [**Your hand is not a toy**](http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/five-training-tips-for-new-kitten-owners)**!** As enticing as it is to wiggle your fingers and have your kitten lunge for them, or to engage in a mock fight with your hand against your kitten, this is a bad practice that will have you looking like a victim of a cat attack as your [cat](http://www.vetstreet.com/cats/) grows. You won't think this game is much fun once your kitten's claws and teeth grow.

Whatever you use, play with your kitten. Playtime strengthens the bonds between you that will hopefully last a lifetime!