

How to exercise your cat

Talk to your friends who have dogs. Or maybe you have a canine family member yourself. Getting them to exercise? Pretty simple: Toss a ball, take a walk, hit the stairs. But cats? That's a little more difficult. You need to be creative and sometimes play a trick or two.

By keeping your cat active, you may be adding time to her life. Encouraging and maintaining mobility keeps a pet's weight in check and also provides mental stimulation. So try these exercises to promote a sound body and mind:

- Have feathers on a stick or laser pointers on hand for your cat to chase. Start with five minutes per day and work up to 15 minutes of active play time. This can be all at once or spread throughout the day. Cats are often more active at night, so try working a 15-minute exercise plan into your evening routine.

- Take your cat's daily food portion and divide it into several bowls placed around the house. Your cat will have to go from

room to room to find the food. If your cat is healthy enough, consider placing food dishes on elevated platforms that will require mental and physical challenge. Start this process by adding just one extra bowl so your cat gets used to the idea of "hunting" for food.

- During meal time, toss each kibble across the floor to encourage your cat to get up and walk to find and devour the morsel.

- Encourage your cat to play by keeping toys available. Change them up to keep it exciting.

- Have a cat tree or other apparatus to climb up to help to your cat strengthen her muscles.

- Use treats—sparingly—to get your cat to jump up on a chair and back down again.

- Consider adding another feline friend if your cat is an "only child" as many cats will play with each other and burn more calories.

