



Feline Play Aggression

Play is serious business for most kittens. Their social development incorporates play in the development of predatory skills for successful hunting. When taken to extremes, play aggression can manifest itself as attacks against humans and even other cats in the household. This is usually exhibited by some young cats after 12 weeks of age. To prevent play aggression, owners need to play with their kitten using appropriate toys and avoid using body parts in the play. Kittens should **never** be allowed to scratch or bite on human hands or feet.

It is helpful to keep a journal of all attacks that take place, noting time of day and location. This will help to identify patterns. In addition, owners should know where their cat is at all times, so a large noisy bell should be attached to the cat's collar. A craft-type jingle bell is more effective than the small bells that already are attached to many collars. Be sure to use a quick-release or elastic collar on cats.

Keeping the cat's claws trimmed at all times will help to minimize scratches and scars to the owner's body in the case of a surprise attack. If anyone is injured by the cat, seek immediate competent medical help.

Never physically punish a cat, it will teach the cat that you will play back roughly, and the cat will respond with intensified violence. You also risk harming your pet.

If a kitten tends to attack at one location, you can anticipate this and be prepared to either toss a small toy to divert the cat or use an appropriate noise deterrent to get the cat out of the area. A compressed air canister or a pop can with rocks inside will work fairly well, keeping the noise deterrent in a fanny pack assures its availability at all times. Occasionally, the use of a squirt gun worn around the owner's neck can be useful as a ready and safe deterrent.

Scheduling a set time of day for active, aerobic play sessions allows the cat plenty of time to release excess energy and interact appropriately with the owner. Toys should be of the light, moveable variety such as Feline Flyer (a flexible stick with a weighted feather attached), fishing pole type cat toys, foam balls, furry mice, and other enticing objects. In addition, creating an inviting environment with paper bags to hide in, ping pong balls in the tub to roll around, Cat Dancer toy to jump at, and feeder toys for cats to enjoy will allow them the opportunity to practice their skills when you are not around. Be sure toys are not small enough to be ingested and all toys with strings should only be used when the owner is interacting with the cat.

In some cases, the addition of another young cat (at least 3 months of age) will solve play aggression against owners very quickly. Another kitten is ready for all that play and will likely not tire of the activity. If you decide to get another kitten, be prepared financially for the additional responsibilities that go with adding to your family.