

DIY Cat Toys from Throw-Away Stuff You Have Sitting Around

You don't need to spend a fortune to keep your cat entertained — nor sacrifice your curtains, couch, or table legs. Here are 4 ridiculously simple DIY toys you can make from stuff you'll probably toss in the trash anyway. Why not repurpose for your kitty's entertainment?

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Cats love a good romp, but if they don't have a few fun distractions to keep them involved, they may become enamored by your curtains or play “scratch and dent” on your table legs. Increase your kitty's playtime options with a few toys you can make yourself without spending a lot of cash
- Certain fabrics are all the rage to imaginative cats, particularly fabrics with a texture they can sink their claws into. Yarn toys fit the bill. Those you can knit yourself can be as colorful and theme-varied as you want
- Cats can also amuse themselves with DIY kick pillows made from stray socks, stuffed with catnip and sewn across the top. Knotty knots are a third DIY option, made from strips of old T-shirt material and tied to form a pom-pom of sorts. Cats love 'em all
- Cat owners know how much their little buddies love scratching. You could buy your own scratching post, but commercial costs can be prohibitive
- A wood post, a plywood base and some sisal twine will get you started on making a sturdy homemade “territorial” post your cat can scratch for years to come

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One of the funny things about kitties is that they can be amused by the oddest things — feathers, strings, plastic bottle caps and empty paper bags. Then you have more sophisticated items you can purchase, such as catnip mice and lasers. Otherwise, cats have been known to find mischief on drapes, sofas and a roll of toilet paper if more feline friendly options aren't available.

If you feel that keeping your kitty in cat toys might begin to get a little expensive, you're right. But with a little ingenuity, you can make some extra cat distractions for pennies on the dollar. You'll not only save, but your cat will be the envy of all the others, he'll have so many toys in his proverbial war chest.

Yarn Toys

Furry felines can't help themselves when they're enticed by toys made of yarn. They have just the right texture for Fluffy to sink her claws into, carry around and love on. You and your knitting needles can click up a plethora of patterns — some are even available for free, online. Your pattern choice can range from balls with bells to mini dolls, dogs and donuts.

A sturdy acrylic yarn will stand up well to rough cat handling. It's washable and won't stretch too much, plus the fibers won't fray or break down enough for kitty to accidentally ingest them. Wool is another good fabric for this purpose; when you run it through the washing machine, the heat and friction felts the fibers into one tough surface. It's best to knit your wool yarn toy first, then launder, which locks the fibers together and makes the piece softer.

Catnip Kick Pillow

Kitty loves fantasizing about catching mice. That's why the catnip kick pillow is such a hit in the kitty world. They love holding the toy to their chest and at the same time kicking it with their hind legs. It might give them the idea their prey is actually trying to get away, which of course is half the fun!

As long as you can sew a relatively straight line, all you need is an old mismatched sock, some catnip and a few handfuls of polyester fiberfill (or you can recycle stuffing from old pillows). Just stuff the sock as much as you want, add catnip and sew the top closed. Voilà! Or, if you'd rather, leave a little space at the top to tie a sturdy knot. That will give your cat a little extra to chew on.

Knotty Knots

Colorful and creative, this toy makes use of jersey T-shirt scraps. The soft fabric doesn't unravel when cut, but actually curls, so no hems are required. In fact, this cat pastime requires not a stitch of sewing — just a lot of knots. Besides the T-shirts, all you need is a sharp pair of scissors.

Cut your ready-to-pitch T-shirts into one-inch-wide strips, then snip the strips into five-inch lengths. To begin, tie the very ends of the first strip together to form a loop. Then place three strands together, fold them in half and tie the strands to the loop, side by side, to form a "star" pattern. Then add more strips and tie them to make the toy bigger and fluffier. Just be sure to tie the knots tightly so they'll stay secure when your cat tosses, chases, pulls, claws and bites it!

Sisal Scratch Post

Something about sinking their claws into texture, such as carpeting and upholstery, is irresistible to cats. A purely natural behavior, not only does it sharpen their claws, it helps them mark their territory. Providing a suitable scratching surface for Fluffy will show her where her territory is and thereby rescue your furniture.

Assembling your own scratching post is as easy as finding a discarded two-by-four — or nail a few together if you want it symmetrical — and 3/8-inch sisal rope. Sisal rope is ideal, but jute or burlap is fine, too. (Pass up the synthetic, nylon and cotton rope varieties to keep your cat from getting her claws caught.)

Many commercial scratching posts are too short for larger cats. A post measuring at least your cat's length, head to tail, will be tall enough for her to comfortably stand, stretch and claw.

Starting at the bottom, wrap the rope around the post, using carpet tacks every few inches on the first go-round. Then, apply wood glue liberally to the rest of the post and begin wrapping the rope, pushing it down firmly to make sure there are no gaps.

A piece of scrap plywood measuring two feet square or thereabouts will be wide enough to make a base. You can cover it with carpeting or other sturdy fabric if you'd like. A couple of countersunk screws applied through the bottom of the base into the post should keep the entire assembly from tipping when your kitty attacks it.

A variation of this theme might be covering the post with sisal carpeting, which you can cut to size with a box cutter. Apply glue on the wood so the carpet won't slip, then seal edges and seams tightly with carpet tacks. An optional base could be a sturdy chunk of tree limb about four inches across, also wrapped tightly with sisal twine for a natural look and secured to a base.

Keep Her Guessing

You may have noticed that cats, like people, occasionally get bored with the "same old" routine. They like their play times livened up occasionally with something mysterious and unexpected, just like in the wild. That's why your kitty can find a feather at the end of a dangling string endlessly mesmerizing! By making a variety of cat toys yourself, you can save money (depending on how elaborate you get!) and still rotate toys every few weeks or so to keep her body active and her feline imagination fertile and fun.

Sources and References

[Catster.com June 19, 2025](#)
