



catnip toys

NOTHING AWAKENS A CAT'S INNER kitten like catnip. A few sniffs of the herb and a typically dignified feline is suddenly chasing her tail and acting unabashedly clownish. When used to fill a homemade toy mouse or bird, catnip magically brings the plaything to life at least in the eyes—or nose—of a cat.

The secret of catnip's power over felines lies in its pleasant aroma. Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) is a member of the mint family, and its fragrance reminds cats of the pheromonal scent of the opposite sex. Simply put, catnip is an aphrodisiac.

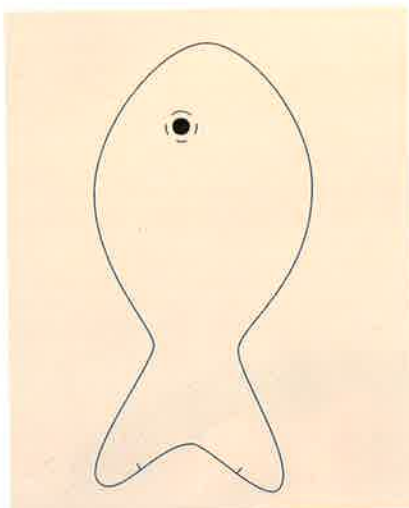
Cats, notoriously self-sufficient, can happily amuse themselves, but a solo play session is no substitute for a few minutes with one's master. Kitties love ritual; cavorting with them at the same time each day strengthens the bond between a cat and her human, and it gives the cat a greater sense of security and well-being.

These whimsical toys are sure to prompt hours of fun for you and your cat. And when playtime is over and kitty curls up for a snooze—as she likely will, for when games combine with catnip, a catnap is sure to follow—think of what happy dreams she'll have, with another day of high jinks to look forward to.

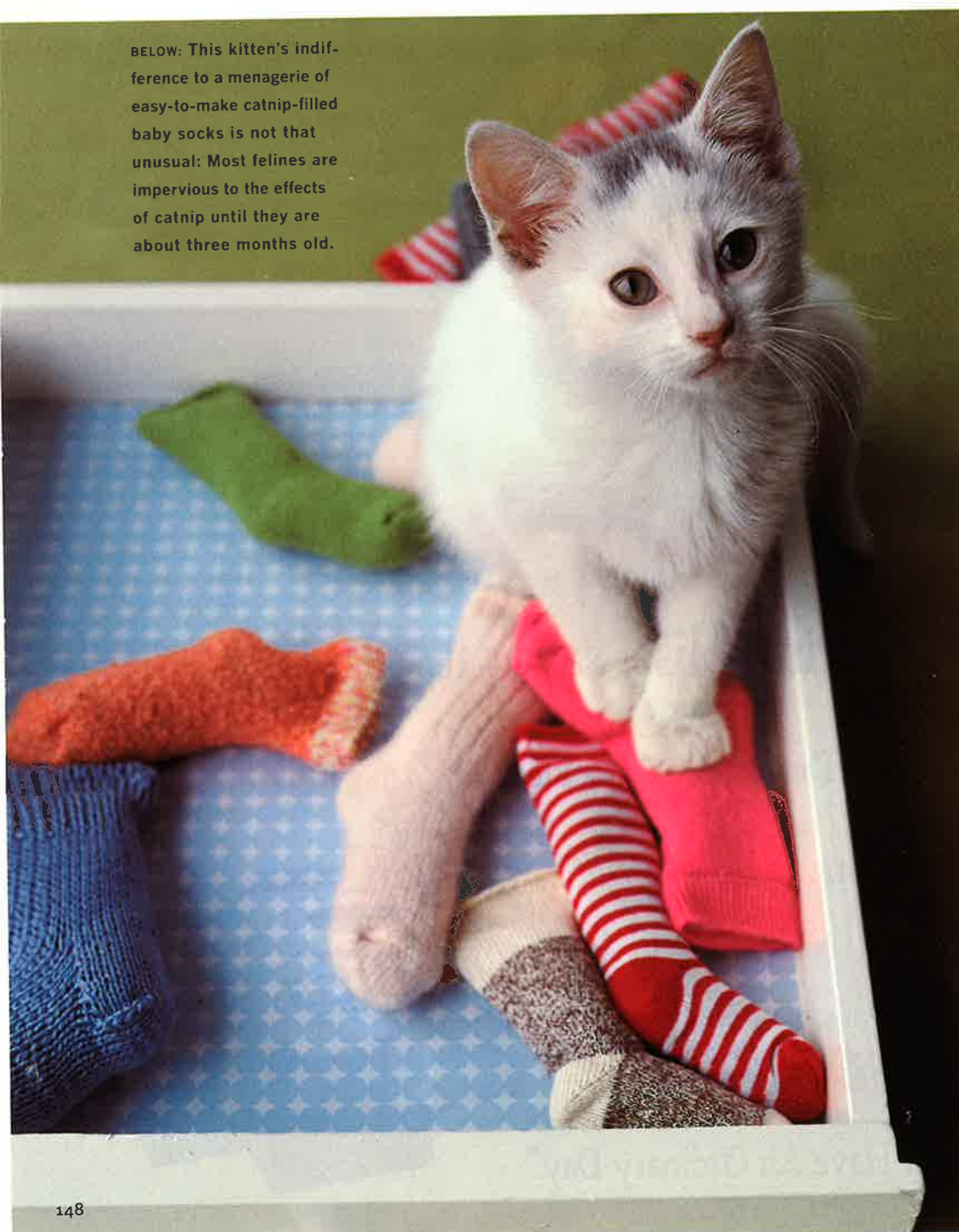
Homemade toys filled with dried catnip, like this fish on a pole, are often sturdier and more attractive than the store-bought kind, and they make great gifts for a feline companion.

fishing pole how-to

Fishing has always been a nice way for friends to commune; this catnip-filled fish on a pole lets a cat and his pal enjoy quality time together. Enlarge template as desired. Pin two pieces of fabric together, wrong sides facing (if fabric is thin, sandwich interfacing between them). Trace template onto fabric using a fabric pen with disappearing ink; stitch on top of tracing, leaving a 1-inch opening at fish's tail. Cut out fish with pinking shears, staying close to stitching without cutting into it. Fill with catnip (see "Using a Funnel," below). Sew one end of 2½ feet of thick thread in mouth. Tie other end to a 3-foot dowel, and dab with glue. Embroider eyes, using embroidery thread.



BELOW: This kitten's indifference to a menagerie of easy-to-make catnip-filled baby socks is not that unusual: Most felines are impervious to the effects of catnip until they are about three months old.



baby sock how-to

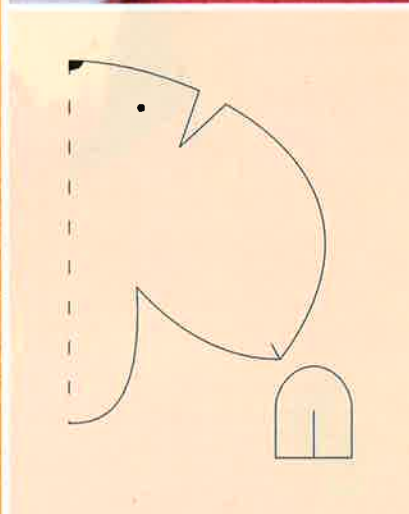
Sometimes simple is best, like this baby sock filled with catnip. The Velcro closure allows you to replace the filling from time to time, keeping its appeal alive. Using a baby sock of your choosing, turn the sock inside out, and sew two strips of Velcro along the top. If using self-stick Velcro, follow directions on package; then add a few stitches for extra security. Turn sock right side out, fill (see "Using a Funnel," below), and close.

USING A FUNNEL

A funnel makes filling toys easier. Start with catnip; use dried catnip—fresh might mold. Crumble any large pieces. Insert funnel into the toy. Spoon catnip into funnel, and then use a chopstick or other utensil to work the herb through the funnel spout and into the toy. Keep in mind that catnip settles, so pack the toy tightly.



ABOVE: What kitty can refuse a cat-and-mouse game, particularly when the mouse is filled with enticingly fragrant leaves? Cats won't overdose on catnip, but their sense of smell can become overloaded; too much of the herb may make a cat immune to its effects. Between play sessions, store toys in an airtight container along with some loose catnip to freshen the toys' scent and to keep your cat's nose sensitive.



mouse how-to

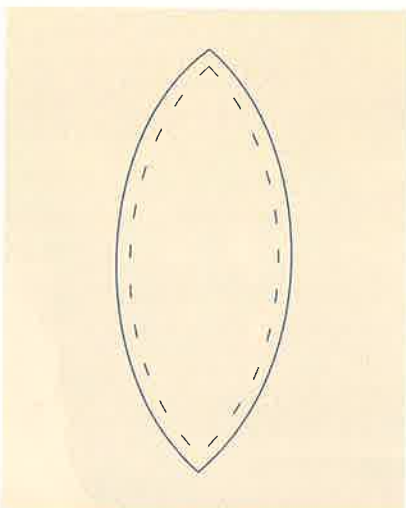
Ultrasuede makes for a handsome and durable mouse, but any sturdy fabric that does not unravel can be used.

1. Enlarge mouse templates as desired. Cut out body and ear templates. Fold fabric in half. Place flat side of body template along fold, trace, and cut. Trace ear template on two pieces of fabric; cut. For tail, cut a narrow 6-inch length of fabric. To sew body, keep fabric folded along bottom; topstitch from nose to ear slit and from ear slit to tail, leaving 1/8-inch seam allowance. Fit bottom flap to body; topstitch, working tail in. **2.** Fill body with catnip (see "Using a Funnel," page 148), adding batting at the end to help mouse keep its shape. Fold one ear in half, and stitch along cuts; slip into slit in body, perpendicular to back seam. Sew closed. Repeat to make other ear. Embroider a nose and two eyes.

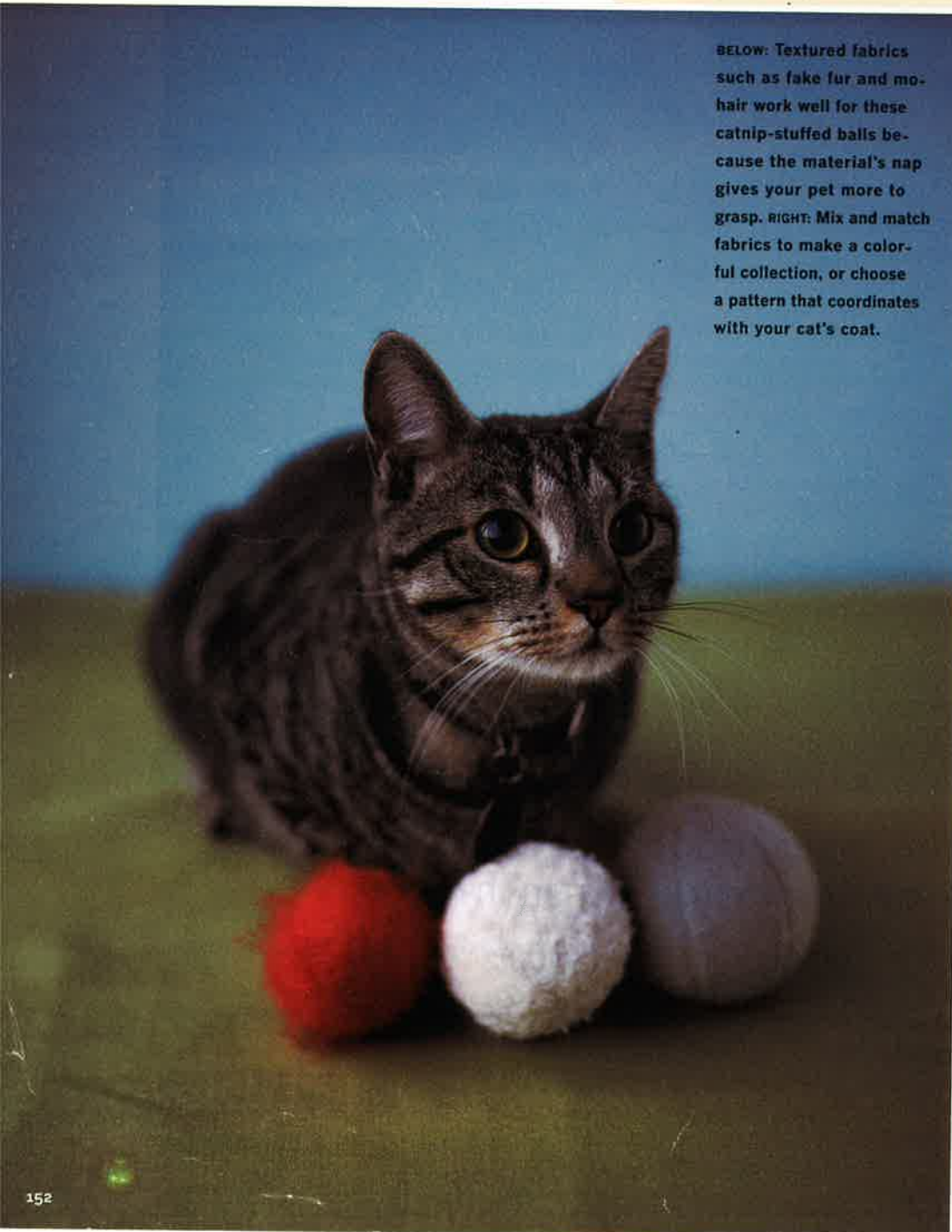


jingle ball how-to

Enlarge template as desired. Working on the bias, trace template on six pieces of fabric; cut out. Pin two pieces together, right sides facing. Sew along one edge, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch seam allowance (for the ball to be symmetrical, seam allowances must be equal). Pin a third piece to a raw edge of the two joined pieces, right sides facing, and sew. Set aside; repeat with remaining three pieces. To assemble the ball, nest one half inside the other, right sides facing. Starting at a median point (not where all pieces converge), sew halves together, leaving an opening of about 1 inch. Turn right side out. Fill halfway with catnip (see "Using a Funnel," page 148); add bell, and finish filling. Overfilling the ball will prevent the bell from jingling. Turn raw edges under, and slipstitch closed.



BELOW: Textured fabrics such as fake fur and mohair work well for these catnip-stuffed balls because the material's nap gives your pet more to grasp. **RIGHT:** Mix and match fabrics to make a colorful collection, or choose a pattern that coordinates with your cat's coat.





LEFT: Each cat has his or her own preferred mode of play. Some enjoy pouncing on "prey" dragged along the floor, while others like leaping to intercept flying objects. Still others prefer to lie on the floor and ponder their options.

SEE THE GUIDE FOR SOURCES



bird on a wire how-to

A suction cup attaches this toy to a window so your cat can amuse herself. 1. Enlarge templates, Trace body and wing templates onto two pieces of felt each and belly and cap templates onto one piece each. Cut out pieces; pin body pieces together along top edge. Fit belly piece in; align pieces and pin. Starting at tail, sew by hand with a whipstitch down and up and around head to midpoint of back. Sew other side of belly. 2. For goldfinch, decorate wings with a chainstitch, using embroidery thread. Sew wings and cap to body. Fill with catnip (see "Using a Funnel," page 148). Wrap feathers together with thread; insert and stitch securely at tail. Using pliers, loop one end of 2 feet of piano wire. Insert into bird; sew closed. Poke a hole in a suction cup, thread wire through, and pinch closed with pliers.

