

# Why cats chase mice — explained for a 14-year-old

Cats chasing mice comes from their natural hunting instincts. Even pet cats that are well fed still want to stalk, pounce, and catch small moving things. Below is a step-by-step explanation of the behavior, what it means, and what you can do to keep your cat and wildlife safe.

## 1. The hunting instinct (step-by-step)

1. **Detect:** Cats notice small, quick movements and high-pitched noises — mice make both.
2. **Stalk:** The cat crouches and moves slowly to get closer so it won't scare the prey.
3. **Chase or pounce:** When close enough, the cat sprints and pounces to catch the mouse.
4. **Subdue and sometimes eat:** Wild cats often kill and eat prey. Domestic cats sometimes do, sometimes just play with or bring the mouse to their human.

Even if a cat is not hungry, this sequence is rewarding because it matches instincts polished by evolution.

## 2. Play vs. real hunting

- Kittens and young cats often practice hunting by playing. That play builds the skills used when they catch real prey.
- Indoor play with toys mimicking prey helps satisfy this drive without harming wildlife.

## 3. Why it matters (risks and problems)

- **Health risks for the cat:** mice can carry parasites (fleas, worms) and diseases; a mouse may also have eaten rodent poison, which can poison the cat.
- **Wounds and infection:** catching or fighting a mouse can cause bites or scratches that may become infected.
- **Wildlife impact:** Free-roaming cats kill birds and other small animals. Keeping cats indoors helps protect local wildlife.

## 4. What to do if your cat catches a mouse

1. If the cat brings a dead mouse inside, wear gloves and dispose of the mouse in a sealed bag. Wash your hands afterward.
2. Check your cat for visible bites or cuts and clean any wounds lightly. If there are deep wounds or bleeding, contact a vet.
3. Watch for signs of illness over the next few days: vomiting, diarrhea, fever, limp, or unusual tiredness. Call the vet if you see these.
4. Keep your cat's vaccinations, flea control, and deworming up to date — these reduce risks from eating rodents.

## 5. How to redirect hunting behavior safely (practical steps)

1. **Daily play sessions:** Do two short sessions (10-15 minutes) each day with a wand toy that mimics prey movement. Let the cat catch the toy sometimes so it feels rewarded.

2. **Use prey-style toys:** Small, mouse-shaped toys, balls, and toys that move on their own help. Rotate toys weekly so the cat stays interested.
3. **Food puzzles and treat-dispensing toys:** These make the cat work for food like it would for prey and provide mental stimulation.
4. **Make the environment interesting:** Cat trees, hiding boxes, and shelves to jump on give chances to stalk and pounce safely indoors.
5. **Avoid punishment:** Punishing a cat for hunting won't stop the instinct and may damage your bond. Use redirection and enrichment instead.

## 6. Simple DIY ideas you can try

- Make a DIY wand toy by tying a small toy or feather to a string and a stick. Move it like a mouse scurrying.
- Hide small treats around the house for a controlled 'hunt' session.
- Stuff a sock with crinkly paper or a small toy and toss it for your cat to chase.

## 7. Summary — what a 14-year-old should remember

Cats chase mice because they are built to hunt. That's normal and natural. You can help your cat use that energy in safe ways with play, toys, and enrichment. Keep your cat's health care up to date and be careful if your cat actually catches a mouse — there are real risks. If you follow these steps, your cat will be happier and wildlife will be safer.

If you want, tell me about your cat (age, indoor or outdoor, favorite toys) and I'll suggest a specific daily play plan and toy list you can try.